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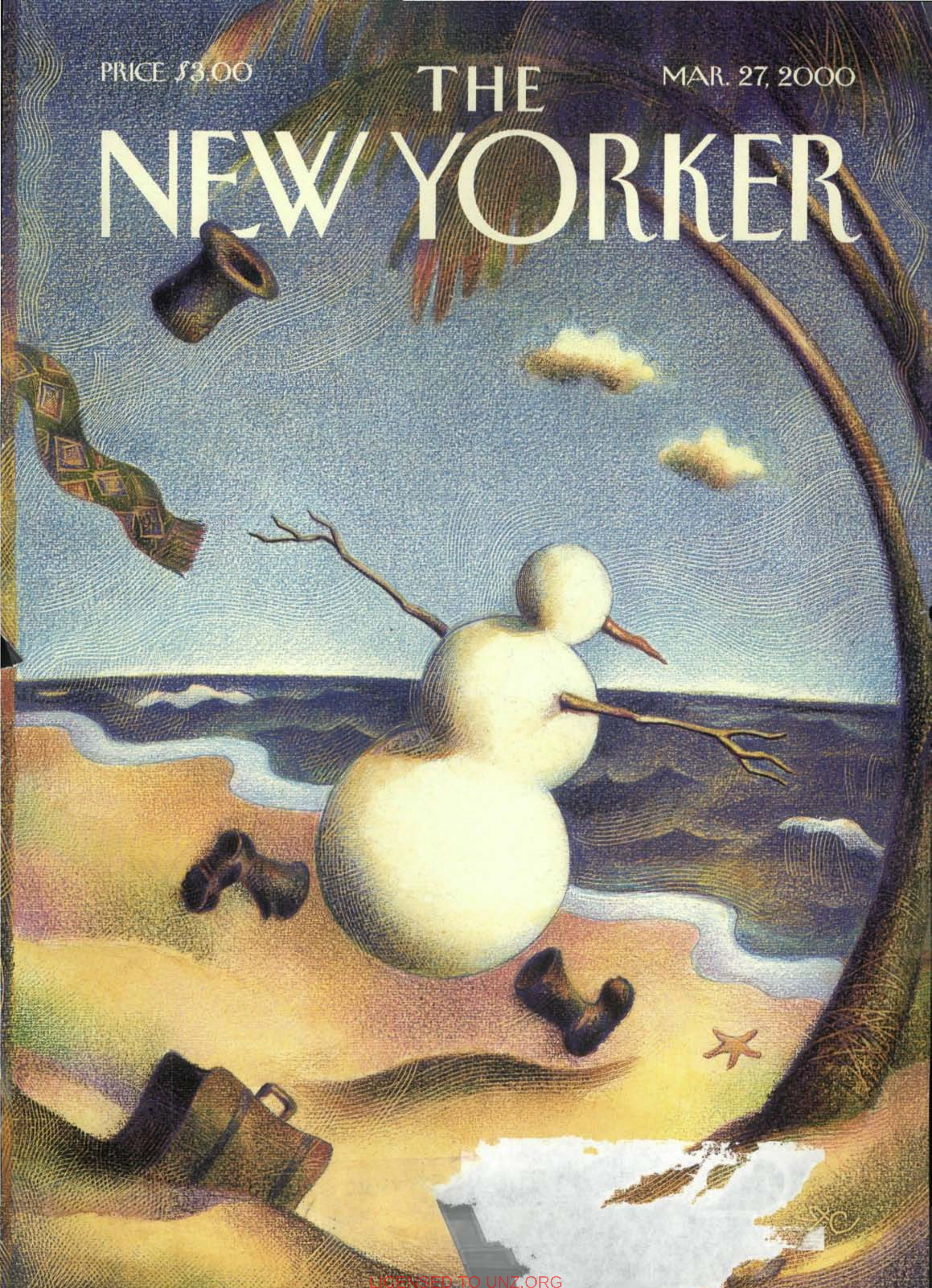
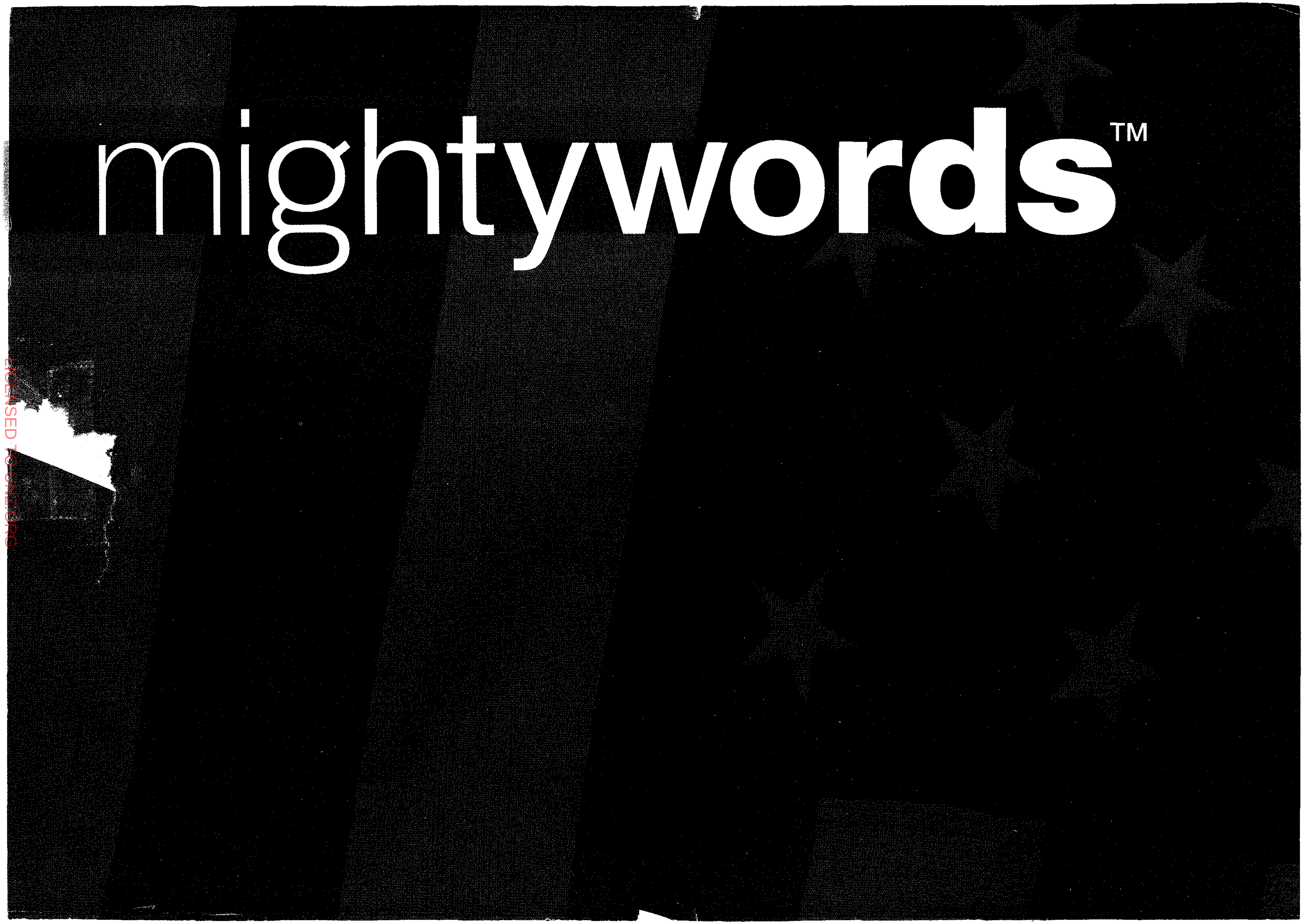
THE NEW YORKER

MAR. 27, 2000





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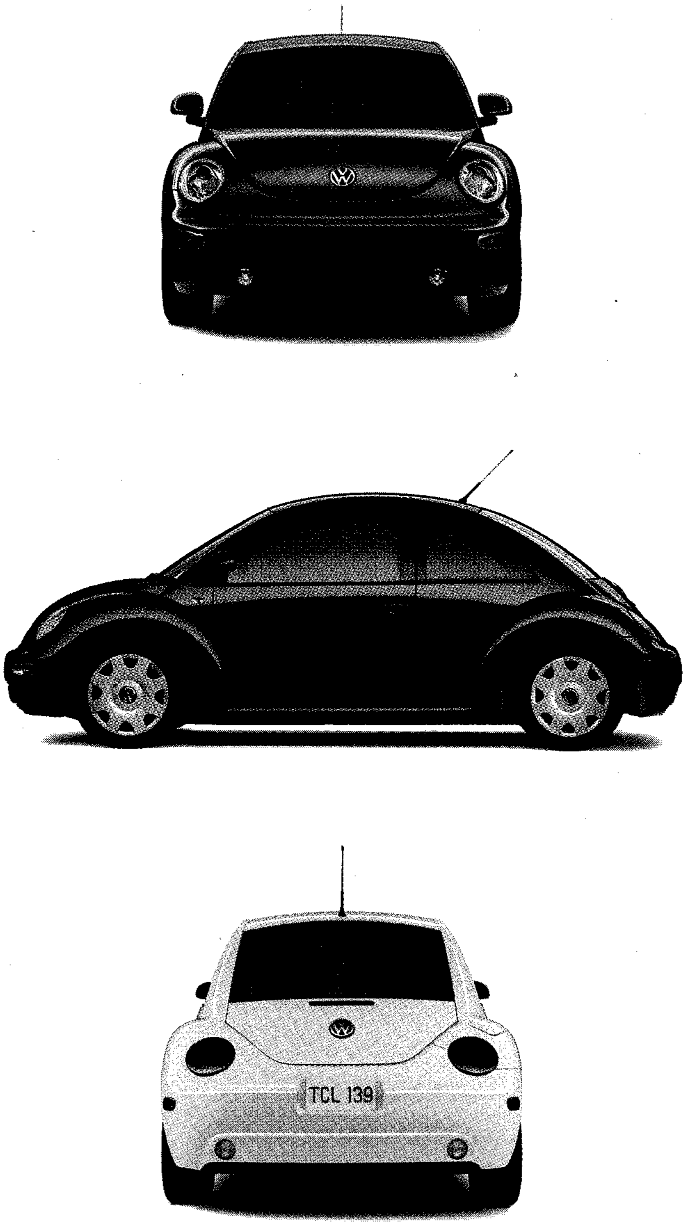

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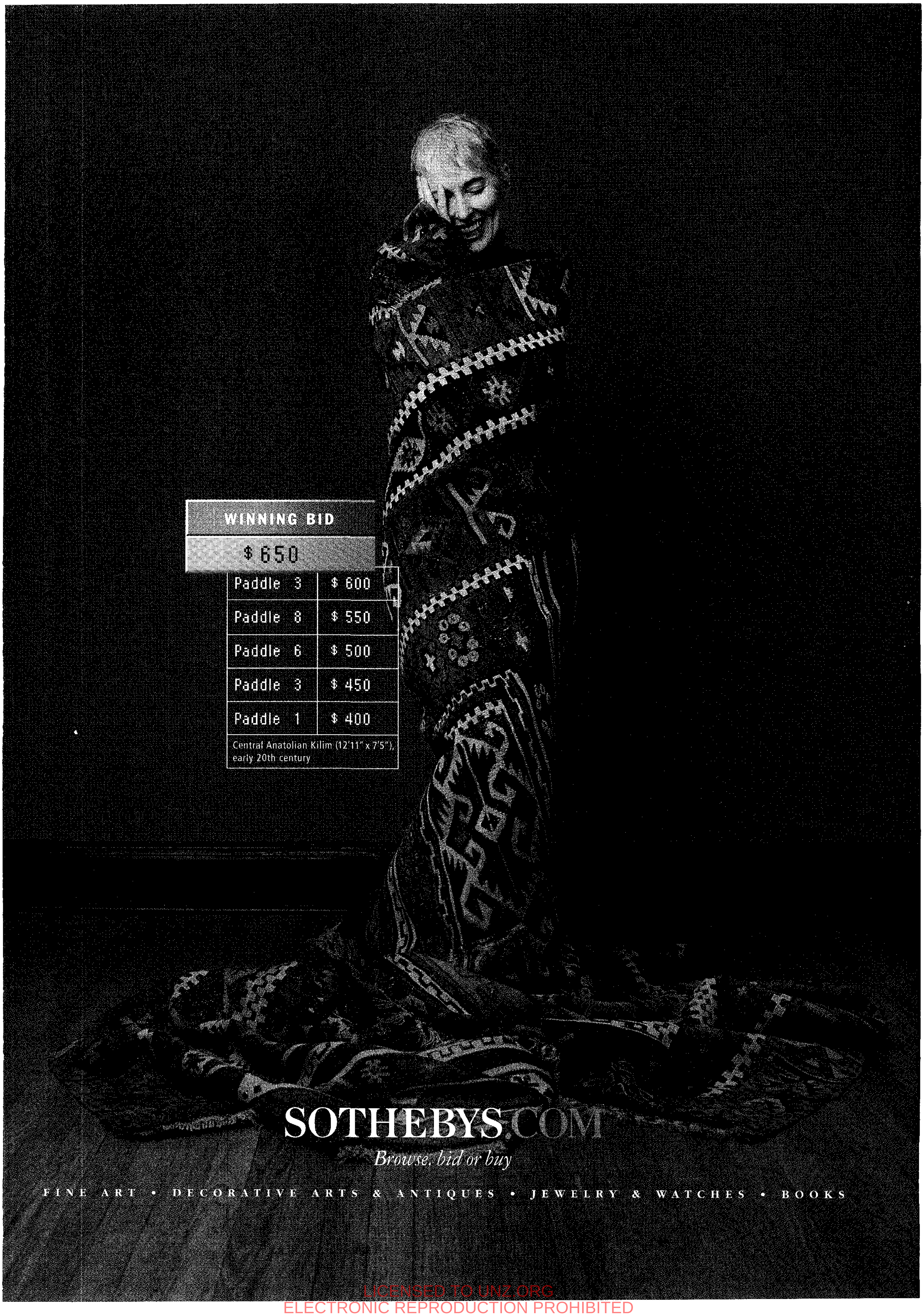

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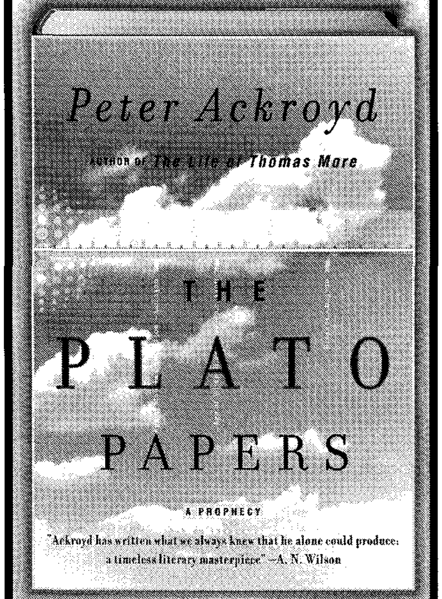
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Sylvia Plath ("Journals," p. 104) kept a diary until her death, in 1963. The complete, unabridged edition of her journals will be published in England next month.

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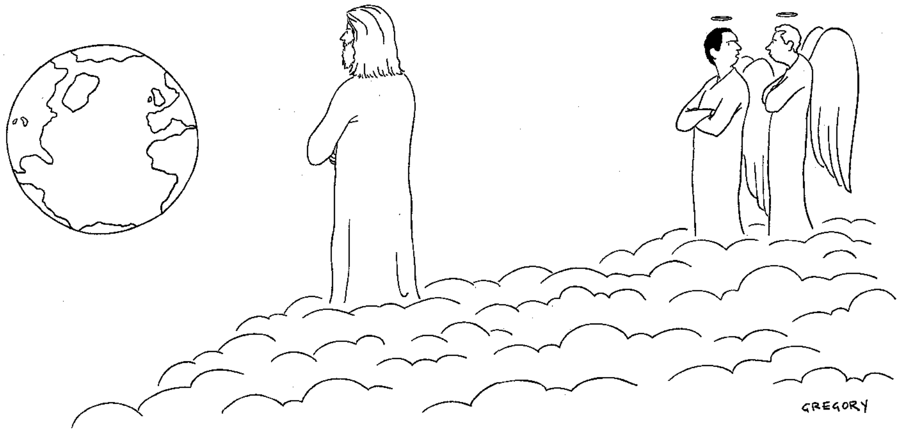

"It has yet to turn a profit."

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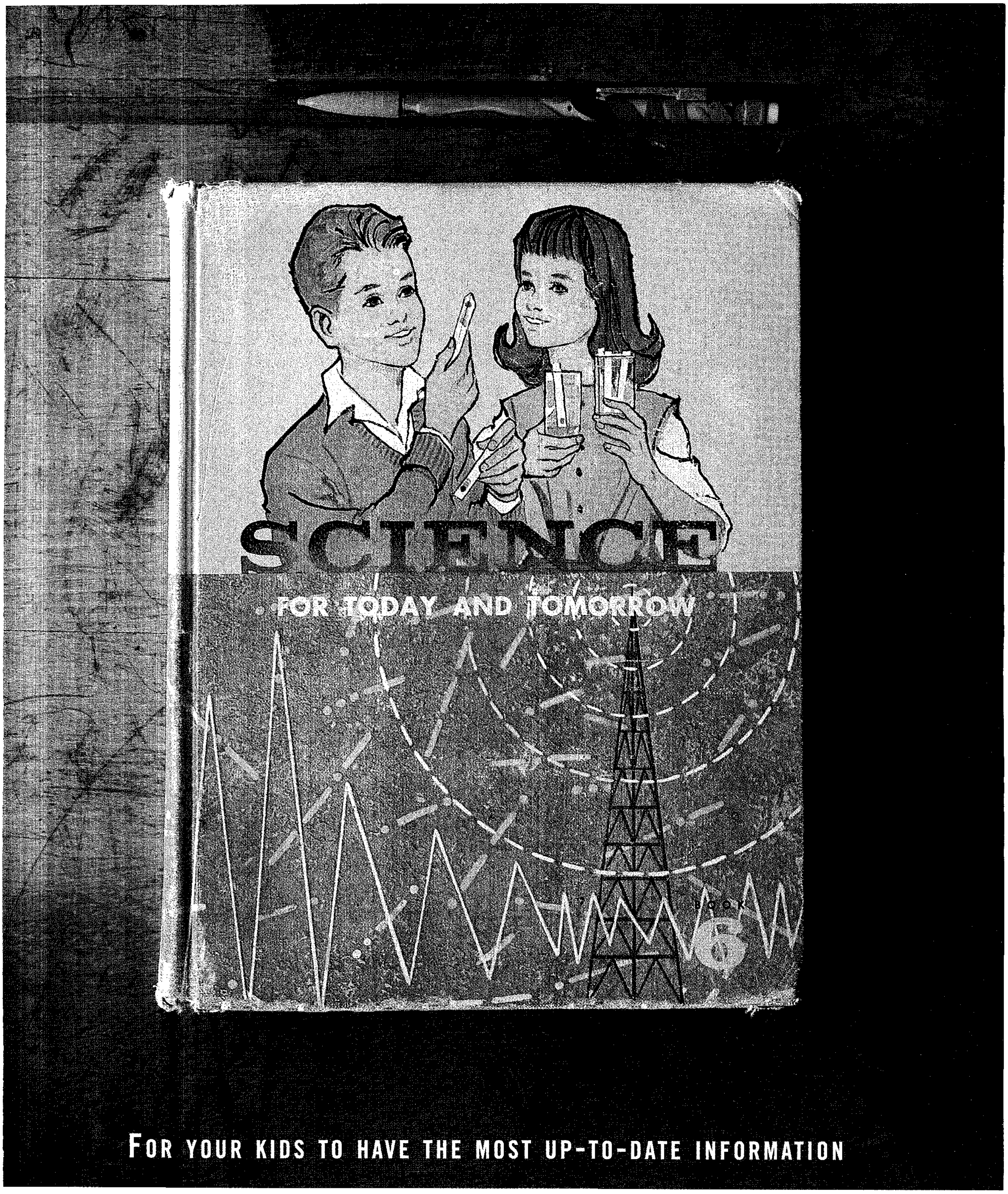

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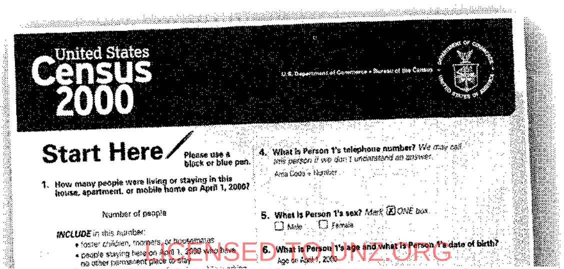
United States
Census
2000

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1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2000?

Number of people

INCLUDE in this number:
- foster children, roomers, or housemates
- people staying here on April 1, 2000 who have no other permanent place to stay

4. What is Person 1's telephone number? *We may call this person if we don't understand an answer.*

Area Code + Number

5. What is Person 1's sex? *Mark* ☒ *ONE box.*

☐ Male ☐ Female

6. What is Person 1's age and what is Person 1's date of birth?

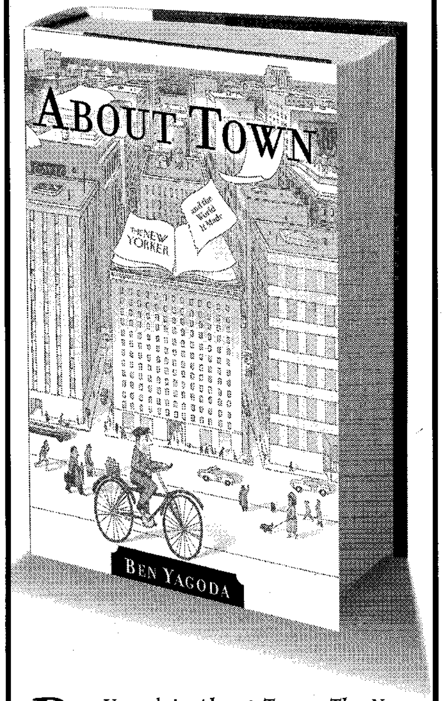
Age on April 1, 2000

Dear Harold,

I want more money
I want more money
I want more money.

—John O'Hara, in a letter
to Harold Ross, 1939

New Yorker writers
always get straight
to the point.



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—*Columbia Journalism Review*

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THE MAIL

GUT INSTINCTS

In discussing the practices of the N.Y.P.D. Street Crimes Unit (to which Amadou Diallo's killers belonged), Jeffrey Toobin ("The Unasked Question," March 6th) writes that when a "cop's gut" tells him, as it often does, to stop and pat down an innocent young black man, the only cost to the man is "a momentary inconvenience." But when policemen identify young black men as potential criminals simply because of the color of their skin and the neighborhoods where they live, the innocent man who is chronically frisked will either accept the cops' identification of him as a latent criminal or refuse to accept their vision of him and, therefore, refuse to accept policemen as authoritative agents of society. Either way, such practices are hardly a momentary inconvenience: they're a significant step either in the creation of a criminal or in the breakdown of the trust required for an effective police force. And each of these outcomes is detrimental to the development of young black men and to society as a whole.

K. A. Dilday
New York City

It is remarkable that four police officers were able to fire forty-one gunshots at an individual without any evidence that a crime had been committed. Apparently each officer carried a weapon capable of firing sixteen bullets and two of them did not stop firing until they had exhausted their ammunition. Wyatt Earp and his friends probably fired fewer shots in their infamous encounter at the O.K. Corral. Though police officials complain about being outgunned by criminals, the discharge of sixteen shots by an ordinary officer, barely trained and easily panicked, in a heavily populated neighborhood, does not advance the cause of law enforcement or the protection of the innocent. If there is any reasonable need for a shoot-out, only well-trained and highly disciplined SWAT teams should be involved.

Gilbert M. Johnson
Bethesda, Md.

Mr. Toobin admits that "the difference between a political protest and a legal proceeding is a necessary one," yet he claims that ignoring the role of race is why "the Diallo case missed the point." On the contrary, the real meaning of this case is that the Reverend Al Sharpton's racial protest remained in the street, where it had every right to be, but in the courtroom "the narrow gaze of the law" prevented our criminal-justice system from deteriorating into a racially motivated lynch mob. Ironically, if Sharpton had not dominated the case from the start by organizing daily protests, the change of venue from the Bronx to Albany would not have been required. The trial would have been held where it belonged, in the very neighborhood that drove it out. Perhaps then the verdict might have been different. It is only Sharpton, not the Diallo case, that missed the point.

Louis D'Amanda
Rochester, N.Y.

LETTER FROM BORNEO

In 1925, when my mother was living in Sandakan, British North Borneo (now Sabah), she received a copy of the first issue of *The New Yorker* from her sister. A somewhat homesick native New Yorker, my mother relished news of her favorite city, and she wrote to her family every week. My grandmother saved all her letters, including the one with her thoughts on that first issue: "I usually read the columns when having tea alone, and enjoy them nearly as much as tho I were subbing to work. The 'New Yorker' is clever in spots, I thought, but frothy and personally, I shouldn't think it would last long."

Peggy Mac Kinnon
Suffield, Conn.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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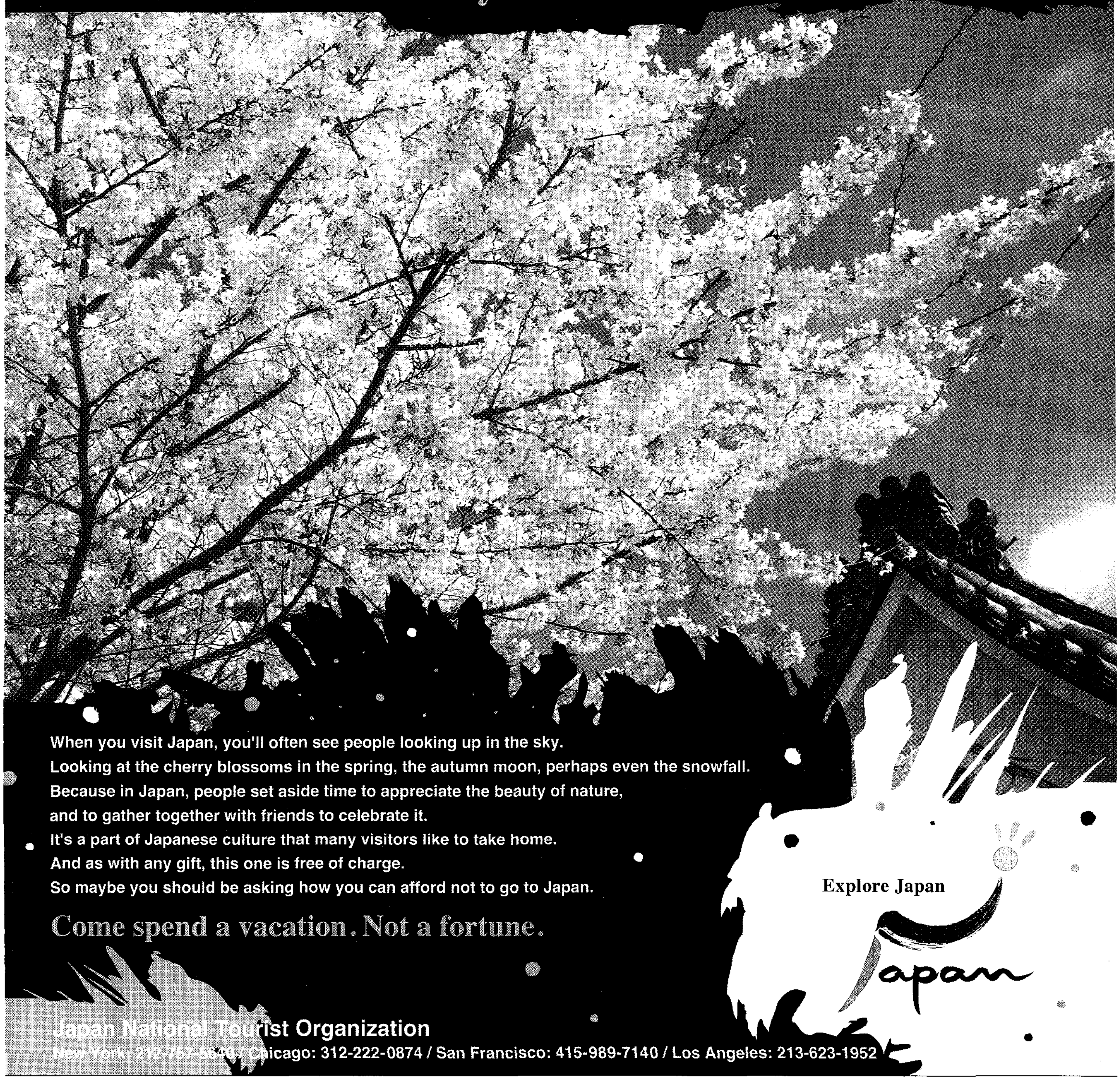

When you visit Japan, you'll often see people looking up in the sky.
Looking at the cherry blossoms in the spring, the autumn moon, perhaps even the snowfall.
Because in Japan, people set aside time to appreciate the beauty of nature,
and to gather together with friends to celebrate it.
It's a part of Japanese culture that many visitors like to take home.
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Entry and acceptance of any prize offered constitutes permission to use winner's name, photograph or other likeness for the purposes of advertising, trade and promotion on behalf of the JNTO without further compensation to the winner unless prohibited by law. For a list of winners (available after May 15, 2000), send a separate, stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Explore Japan Winners, P.O. Box 5212 Blair, NE 68009-5212. Sweepstakes is sponsored by JNTO, One Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AIDA
A musical based on the Verdi opera. With music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice, and a book by Linda Woolverton and David Henry Hwang. Robert Falls is the director. Preview on March 22. Opens March 23 at 6:30. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

BETWIXT
The heretofore solo artist David Cale's first duet, co-starring Cara Seymour, is a collection of portraits of English expatriates in America. In previews. (St. Clements, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's drama, which was inspired by a meeting in 1941 between the German physicist Werner Heisenberg and his Dutch counterpart Niels Bohr. Michael Blakemore is the director. Previews begin March 23. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE HOLOGRAM THEORY
The ghost of a woman's twin enlists her to solve his murder, in a drama by Jessica Goldberg. In previews through March 25. Opens March 27 at 7. (McGinn Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

HOUSE ARREST
In her latest one-woman show, Anna Deavere Smith explores the office of the President of the United States. In previews through March 25. Opens March 26 at 2. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical, based on the last days in the life of you know who. Gale Edwards is the director. Previews begin March 23. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN
Patrick Stewart portrays a bigamist in Arthur Miller's play. David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

TALLER THAN A DWARF
From the pen of Elaine May, a new comedy starring Matthew Broderick and Parker Posey and directed by Alan Arkin. Previews begin March 24. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

TENDERLOIN
City Center's Encores! series continues with a concert staging of the 1960 musical by Jerry Bock (score) and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics). March 23-24 at 8, March 25 at 2 and 8, March 26 at 6:30, and March 27 at 6. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

THE WILD PARTY
Joseph Moncure March's Jazz Age poem is the basis for Michael John LaChiusa and George C. Wolfe's new musical, starring Mandy Patinkin, Eartha Kitt, and Toni Collette. With music by Mr. LaChiusa. Mr. Wolfe is the director. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE ALTRUISTS
Nicky Silver's new comedy, starring Veanne Cox and Sam Robards. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/20/00.) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes April 8.)

AMADEUS
From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

AMERICAN BUFFALO
An Atlantic Theatre Company staging of David Mamet's 1975 play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ARMS AND THE MAN
A Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play, under the direction of Roger Rees. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

BAD BOY NIETZSCHE
Richard Foreman's latest play, an examination of intellectual accountability and a philosopher's slide into madness. Gary Wilmes is wonderful as Nietzsche, who here seems incapable of being truly bad, despite the provocations of a Cruel Man, a Child, and a Beautiful Woman; they test his authenticity by brutally beating a stuffed calico horse (at the beginning of Nietzsche's actual breakdown, he collapsed on a Turin street at the sight of a horse being flogged), taunting him ("Nobody reads the stuff you read"), and corrupting his ideas with willful malapropisms (Nietzsche bakes a loaf of bread filled with jewels, which the Beautiful Woman insists is filled with Jews). Philosophical ruminations degrade into insanity, and the shaky, accident-prone Nietzsche staggers toward his finish. It's a smart play with a big payoff and, like all of Foreman's work, is the sort of thing that sticks in the brain in the best possible way. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS
In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the action has been shifted to a hip-hop realm, and the basic ideas remain the same, but the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

CONTACT
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18-25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

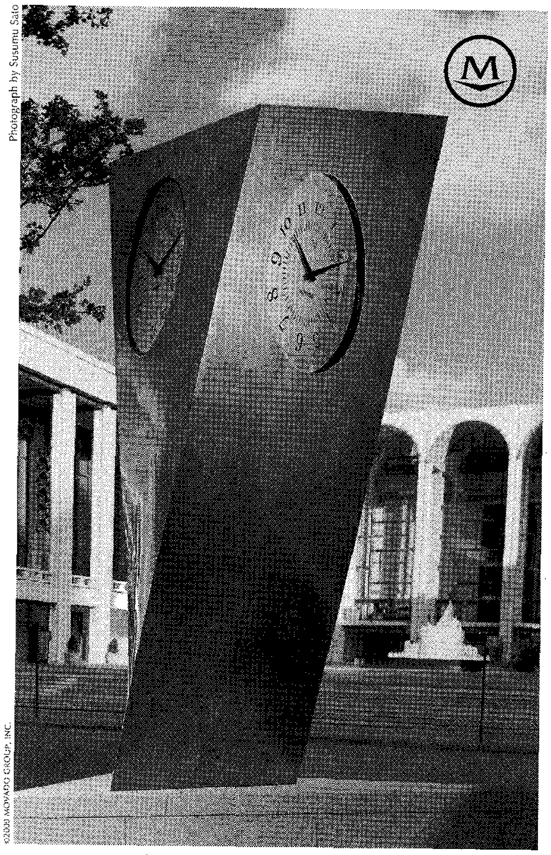
DAME EDNA: THE ROYAL TOUR
Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (11/1/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Donald Margulies's new play is a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE DIRECTOR
Through the character of a theatre director who tries to find truth by playing abusive mind games with everyone he knows, the playwright Nancy Hasty asks whether acting (which is essentially lying) can reveal deeper truth. It's a smart play, and, though it's not entirely satisfying intellectually, John Shea's brilliant performance as the director almost makes it seem so. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

AN EMPTY PLATE AT THE CAFÉ DU GRAND BOEUF
John Rando is the director of this comedy by Michael Hollinger, in which a restaurateur goes on a hunger strike. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes March 25.)

FUDDY MEERS
There is such a thing as inspired nonsense, but don't look for it in David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy, which is an exemplar of expired nonsense. The play relies heavily on handicap humor: one of the characters is blind in one eye, and has a limp, a lisp, and an ear that's a "twisted mass of burnt scar tissue"; another has garbled speech as a result of a stroke; another is—ha ha ha—dyslexic. The excellent cast, featuring J. Smith-Cameron, Robert Stanton, John Christopher Jones, and Patrick Breen, makes the most of what cleverness the play does contain; nonetheless, you may leave the theatre with the feeling that you just attended a Helen Keller-joke marathon. (3/6/00) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)



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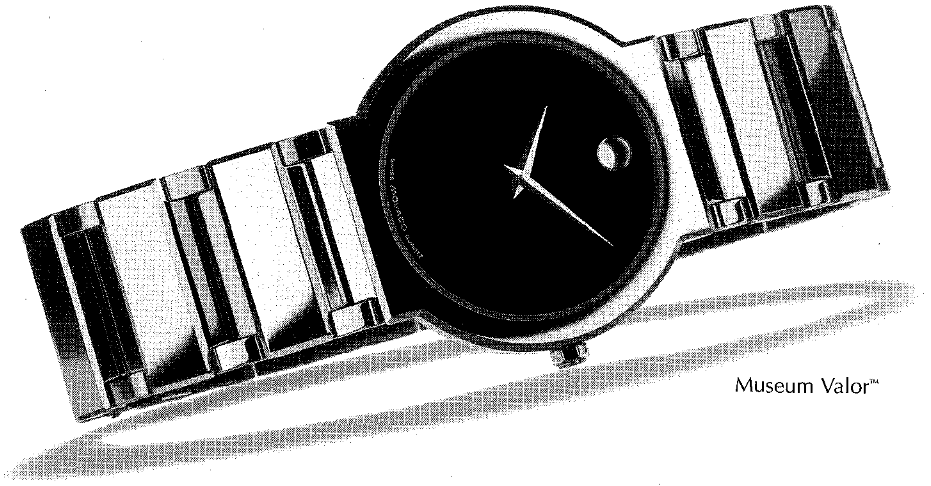

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Deborah Voigt seizes two dramatic roles

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Rachmaninoff: *Isle of the Dead*

Barber: *Andromache's Farewell*, for Soprano and Orchestra

Britten: Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*

R. Strauss: Final Scene from *Salome*

Deborah Voigt displays the breadth of her vocal gifts in two contrasting works. Barber's tortuous, circling themes evoke the anguish of the Greek heroine Andromache bidding farewell to her son; then, Ms. Voigt seizes the ghoulish desire for John the Baptist's head in the biblical tale of Salome.

Deborah Voigt

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IMPERFECT LOVE
The tightrope between love and ambition is delineated with passion, charm, and wit in this retelling of the story of the great Italian actress Eleonora Duse and her playwright lover Gabriele D'Annunzio (here called Gabrielle Torrisi), written and directed by Brandon Cole. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 969-0166.)

JACKIE MASON: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING
The comic is back on Broadway with his latest show. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JAMES JOYCE'S THE DEAD
Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story. (11/8/99) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

KISS ME, KATE
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MOMENT WHEN
A new play by James Lapine, starring Illeana Douglas, Phyllis Newman, and Mark Ruffalo. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 26.)

A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN
Cherry Jones and Gabriel Byrne star in O'Neill's 1943 drama, under the direction of Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Presenting Congreve's "The Way of the World." (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians comes to Broadway. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SATURDAY NIGHT
Stephen Sondheim wrote the music and the lyrics for this show forty-five years ago, when he was twenty-five, but it is only now having its New York première. Set in Brooklyn in the twenties, it's about a group of young men and women caught up in the classic struggle between love and money. (Love wins, natch.) The book, by Julius J. Epstein, is pure corn, but Sondheim's work transforms it into delicious popcorn; his wise, funny lyrics in particular make this musical much more than a mere curiosity. Under the direction of Kathleen Marshall, the good cast brings out the shine on the show's shoes. (3/6/00) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422. Closes March 26.)

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SOUTH OF NO NORTH: STORIES OF THE BURIED LIFE
Nine short stories by Charles Bukowski, adapted into a seamless evening by Leo Farley and Jonathan Powers (who also co-directed). Bukowski is played with acerbic intelligence and fond humor by Stephen Payne; his world of carnival barkers, small-time boxers, too much alcohol, and too little money becomes vivid and significant, particularly because the production allows the audience to see not just Bukowski's art but also the inspiration behind it. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 465-0575. Closes March 26.)

SWING!
A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

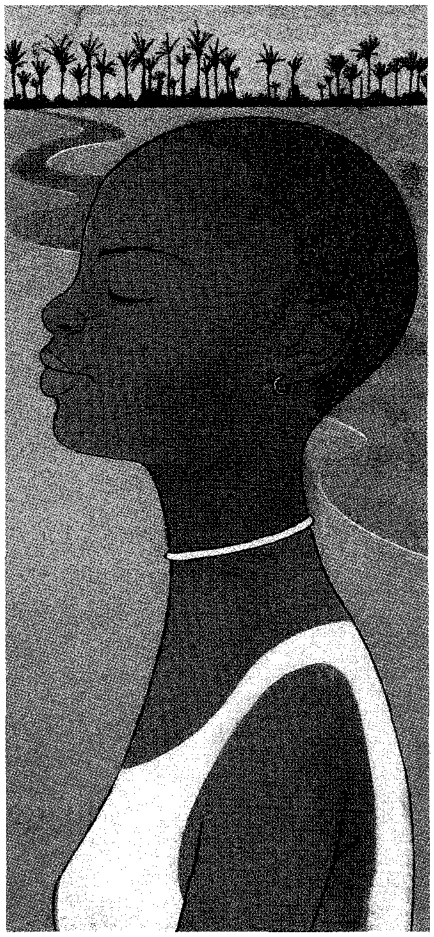
TAKING A CHANCE ON LOVE
A musical revue about the life and work of the late, overlooked lyricist John Latouche, staged by the York Theatre Company. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200. Closes March 26.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's new comedy, about an antidote to midlife malaise, stars Linda Lavin, Michele Lee, and Tony Roberts. (3/20/00) (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE TIME OF THE CUCKOO
Arthur Laurents' 1953 play, set in Venice, about a romantically deprived American woman (or spinster, as they called them in the old days) who gets a chance at a vacation affair with an Italian shop owner. It's a lovely production of a dated play, with roundly good acting. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

TRUE WEST
Philip Seymour Hoffman and John C. Reilly star in Sam Shepard's 1980 play, under the direction of Matthew Warchus. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Eve Ensler's one-woman show is now being performed by a rotating three-woman cast. There's a certain amount of shtick involved, but most of the stories are touching and memorable. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)



Heather Headley, starring in "Aida."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

WAITING IN THE WINGS
In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't: Bette Henritze, Elizabeth Wilson, Rosemary Harris, Dana Ivey, and the evergreen Lauren Bacall. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

WASTE
Harley Granville-Barker's 1907 drama about a Tory sex scandal. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE WAVERLY GALLERY
Eileen Heckart portrays an aging Greenwich Village art dealer who must give up her gallery, in a new play by Kenneth Lonergan. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

THE WILD PARTY
In taking Joseph Moncure March's dark cautionary poem about a group of Prohibition-era profligates and turning it into a musical love story between an angry vaudeville clown and a louche flapper, the composer Andrew Lippa and Manhattan Theatre Club have ended up with a crass,

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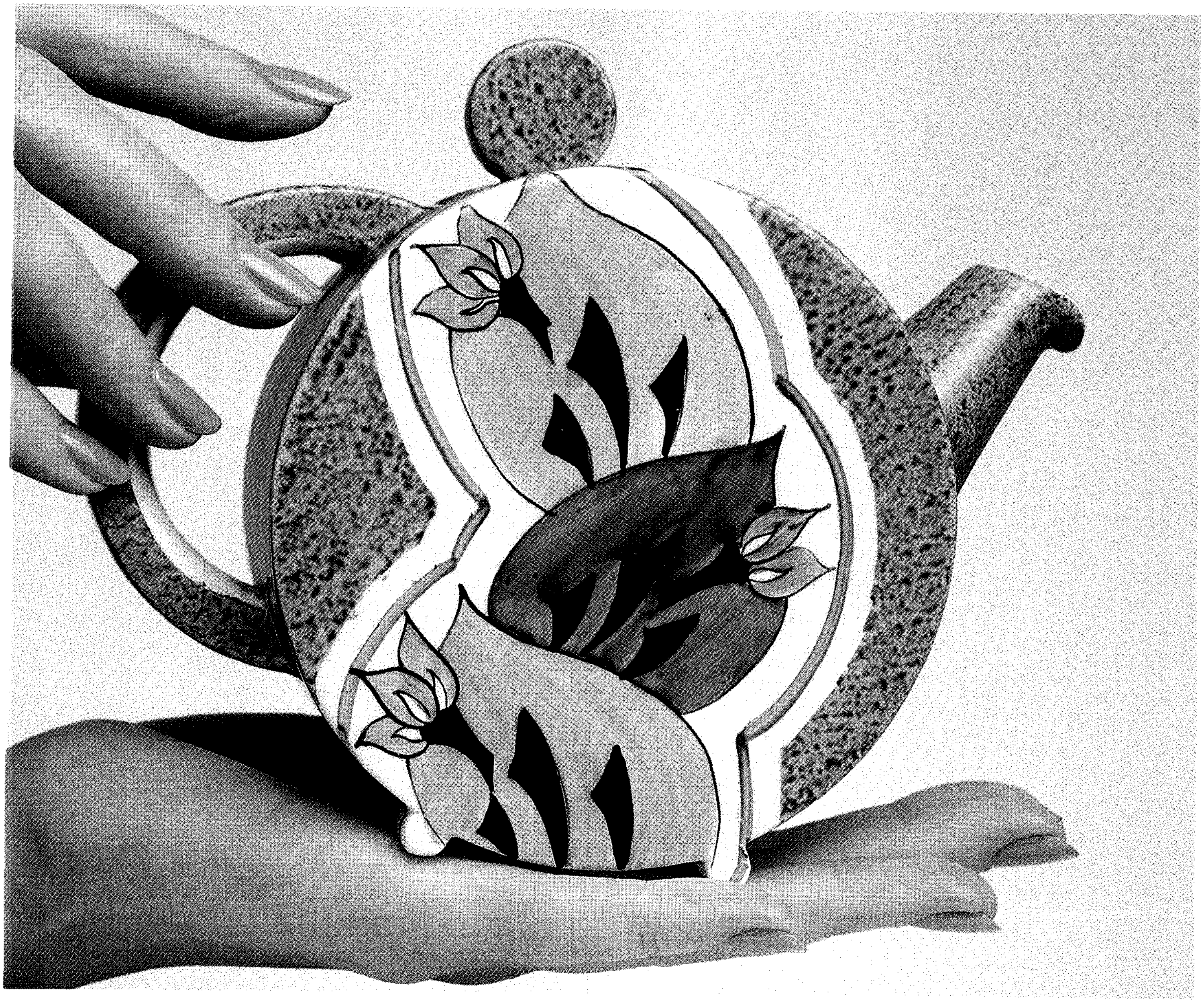

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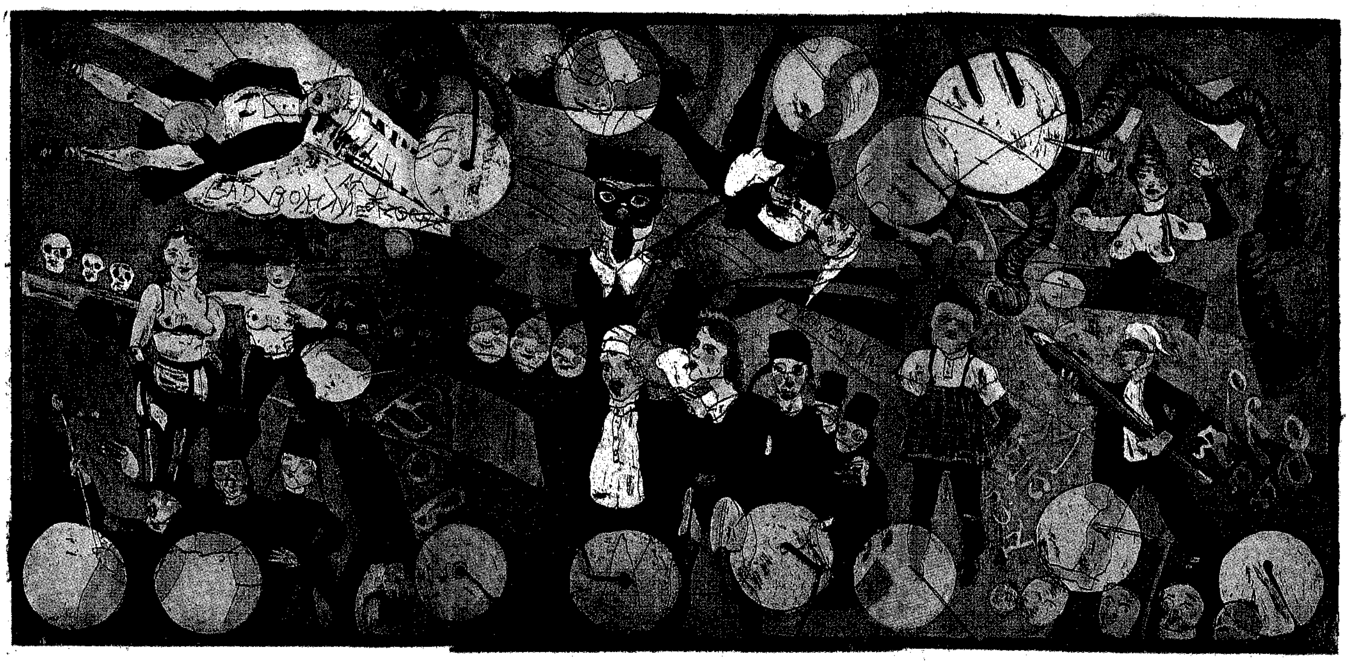

"Bad Boy Nietzsche," the latest play from Richard Foreman, at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

overplayed muddle of mixed intentions and missed opportunities. There's plenty of talent on display—a great set by David Gallo, mostly good costumes, a few fun songs, and, especially, a terrific performance from Brian D'Arcy James, as Burrs the clown. But most of the tunes build to the typical pop-maudlin crescendo that blights contemporary musicals, and they're sung generically, without regard for character. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 2.)

WOYZECK
The German dramatist Georg Büchner died in 1837, before finishing this play about a low-ranking soldier who is driven by poverty and shame to kill his mistress. In their second reinvigoration of a modern classic (last fall they adapted Beckett's "Play"), the Axis Theatre Company juxtaposes silent film (which tells Büchner's own story) with live performance (of the play itself) to create a compellingly unsettling evening. Robert Ierardi's increasingly baffled frustration as Woyzeck gives the play an emotional coherence that it often lacks, and the production, directed by Randy Sharp and Michael Gump, reflects Axis's clear and powerful artistic vision. (One Sheridan Sq., near Seventh Ave. 807-9300.)

DANCE

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
March 21 at 8, the gala opening: "Apple Pie," "Mending," "Tarantella," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 22 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Medium: Rare," "Mending," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 23 at 8: "Play Bach," "Echo," "Nodrog Doggo," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 24 at 8: "Consort," "Medium: Rare," "Mending," and "Felix: The Ballet." ♦ March 25 at 2: A family matinée. ♦ March 25 at 8: "Play Bach," "Echo," "Nodrog Doggo," and "Felix: The Ballet." ♦ March 26 at noon: "Hello Fancy," "The Envelope," "Tarantella," and "Meshugana Dance." ♦ March 26 at 4: "Contra Pose," "Medium: Rare," "Apple Pie," and "The Jig Is Up." ♦ March 28 at 8: "Play Bach," "Yo Shakespeare," "Mending," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 23.)

"THE ANATOMY OF HAPPINESS"
The choreographer Koosil-ja Hwang, a Japanese-born woman of Korean heritage, and her company, Dance Kumikokimoto, première the final installment of a trilogy that explores the overlap of ethnicity and personal identity. In the new work, the dancers perform before a backdrop on which are projected film clips culled from many countries, all of which were originally meant to depict moments of happiness. (92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project, Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 415-5553. March 21-23 and March 25 at 8 and March 26 at 5.)

OKINAWA CLASSICAL DANCE
The twenty-eight-member travelling company from Japan's southernmost prefecture presents traditional dances from the archipelago which reflect the rituals of work, marriage, and court life. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 832-1155. March 23-24 at 8.)

TRINITY IRISH DANCE COMPANY
The twenty-member step-dance company (two men, eighteen women) offers works in the Hibernian tap tradition. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. March 24 at 7, March 25 at 2 and 8, and March 26 at noon and 5.)

ANN MORADIAN'S PERSPECTIVES IN MOTION
In five works, including "Vespers," a duet for two women and a chair, and "Rorschach 157." (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 726-3612. March 22-25 at 8.)

SECOND AVENUE DANCE COMPANY
The spring thesis concert for the N.Y.U. dance program includes three premières, by Diane Coburn Brüning, Doug Elkins, and Kevin Wynn, and the reconstruction of "Steps in the Street," a three-part work ("Devastation," "Homelessness," and "Exile") choreographed by Martha Graham in 1936. (New York University School of the Arts Theatre, 111 Second Ave., between 6th and 7th Sts. 998-1982. March 23-24 and March 26-27 at 8 and March 25 at 2 and 8.)

THE NANCY MEEHAN DANCE COMPANY
For its twenty-ninth-anniversary season, the troupe offers "Towards the Pass," "Bending the Mountain," and a new work. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 24-26 at 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

JAZZ COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE
A double bill featuring Rick Margitza and Frank Kimbrough. An association with the adventurous Jazz Composers Collective is a smart move for saxophonist Margitza, whose recordings are longer on technical ability than on imagination. Collective mainstay Kimbrough, on the other hand, is a near-visionary whose piano-improvising, composing, and band-leading skills seek out the dark corners of untrod jazz terrain. (New School, 55 W. 13th St. For more information, call 995-1552. March 23 at 8.)

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND
The boys from Macon, winding up a thirteen-night stand. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 23-25 at 8.)

"WALL TO WALL KURT WEILL"
More than three hundred musicians appear over twelve hours, paying tribute to the German composer. From 5 to 8:15, Joe Jackson, Olu Dara, Stan Ridgway, and other contemporary pop stars take on Weill's Broadway songs. For details on the rest of the program, see Classical Music. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 25 from 11 to 11.)

SPYRO GYRA
Whether saxophonist Jay Beckenstein ever expected to be playing Milquetoasty fusion at major American venues some twenty-five years after he concocted the idea of Spyro Gyra is anyone's guess. Call him lucky, or his nondiscriminating fans, well, loyal. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 25 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

ARLENE GROCERY
95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—March 24: The next-big-thing that wasn't, singer-songwriter **Ruth Gerson** has been strumming her guitar on the New York scene since before Giuliani settled into Gracie Mansion, and she's garnered a vast collection of favorable press clippings detailing the promise of her big voice and her passionate and original folk-blues tunes. It's no loss for her fans, though, that she doesn't have a major-label deal. Gerson's a tireless performer who can be found all over town (get enough friends together, and she'll even put on a concert in your living room). She appears twice tonight in celebration of her latest EP, "Wish"—here for an early show and again later at CB's Gallery.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—March 23: The horn-heavy, continually evolving collective **Free Radicals** has as many influences as there are items sitting on the shelf of the Houston,

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Texas, pawnshop where they honed their sound during all-night jam sessions. The mark of such musicians as Henry Threadgill, Charles Mingus, James Brown, and the Skatalites can be heard on the twenty-nine songs on the band's self-produced début CD, "The Rising Tide Sinks All," which features no less than fifty-five musicians. Expect fewer live performers, but a wild show nonetheless.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 23-25: **Joan Baez.** Though she's fifty-nine, her soprano is still as pure and clear as springwater. For these shows, the folk legend is joined by the new-breed English folkie **Eliza Carthy.**

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—March 22: In certain indie-rock circles, **Tara Jane O'Neil,** who has sung for such bands as Rodan, Retsin, and the Sonara Pine, is held in irreproachable esteem. The rest of the world can simply appreciate O'Neil's invention and quiet authority, which is displayed gracefully on her new solo release, "Peregrine." March 25: **A Don Piper Situation,** a versatile pop trio led by Austin transplant Don Piper, whose gimlet-eyed songcraft sparked a justly deserved big-label bidding war in 1997; alas, due to record-industry jitters, the Situation's long-awaited début, "Saturate," is only available at live shows, starting tonight. With the **Sharp Things,** a local ensemble led by guitarist Perry Serpa, which specializes in retro-flavored aspirational pop marked by a violin, flugelhorn, cello, and lots of sentimentality.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—With song titles like "Synthetic Dream" and "Fields of Psilocybin," the long-haired trio **Nebula** (here March 25) rocks with a retro punch that's straight out of the Age of Aquarius. ♦ Next door, at CB's Gallery, **Ruth Gerson** (see Arlene Grocery) performs on March 24.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—In what promises to be one of the best shows of the year, **Femi Kuti,** the son of Afro-beat innovator Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, brings his sixteen-piece band, Positive Force, to town on March 23. The younger Kuti, who recently released the acclaimed "Shoki Shoki," possesses his late father's musical talents, but he demonstrates much more restraint, writing super-funky songs that are shorter and more concentrated than his father's marathon jams. The restraint extends beyond music. While Fela had twenty-seven wives, Femi has only one. March 24: **John Scofield's Bump Band.** Jazz guitar-hero Scofield can't be accused of being late to jump on the funk bandwagon. He's been indulging his love of R. & B., on and off, since his career began more than twenty-five years ago. Now that jazz-funk is suddenly the rage with a whole new generation of players, Scofield gets to wear his crown with pride. March 25: On his latest album, "In Reverse," **Matthew Sweet** regresses blithely into a candy-colored idyll of sixties-flavored garage pop. But no amount of nostalgia can obscure his sharp, modern songcraft. March 28: An evening with the former Led Zeppelin bassist and multi-instrumentalist **John Paul Jones.** ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

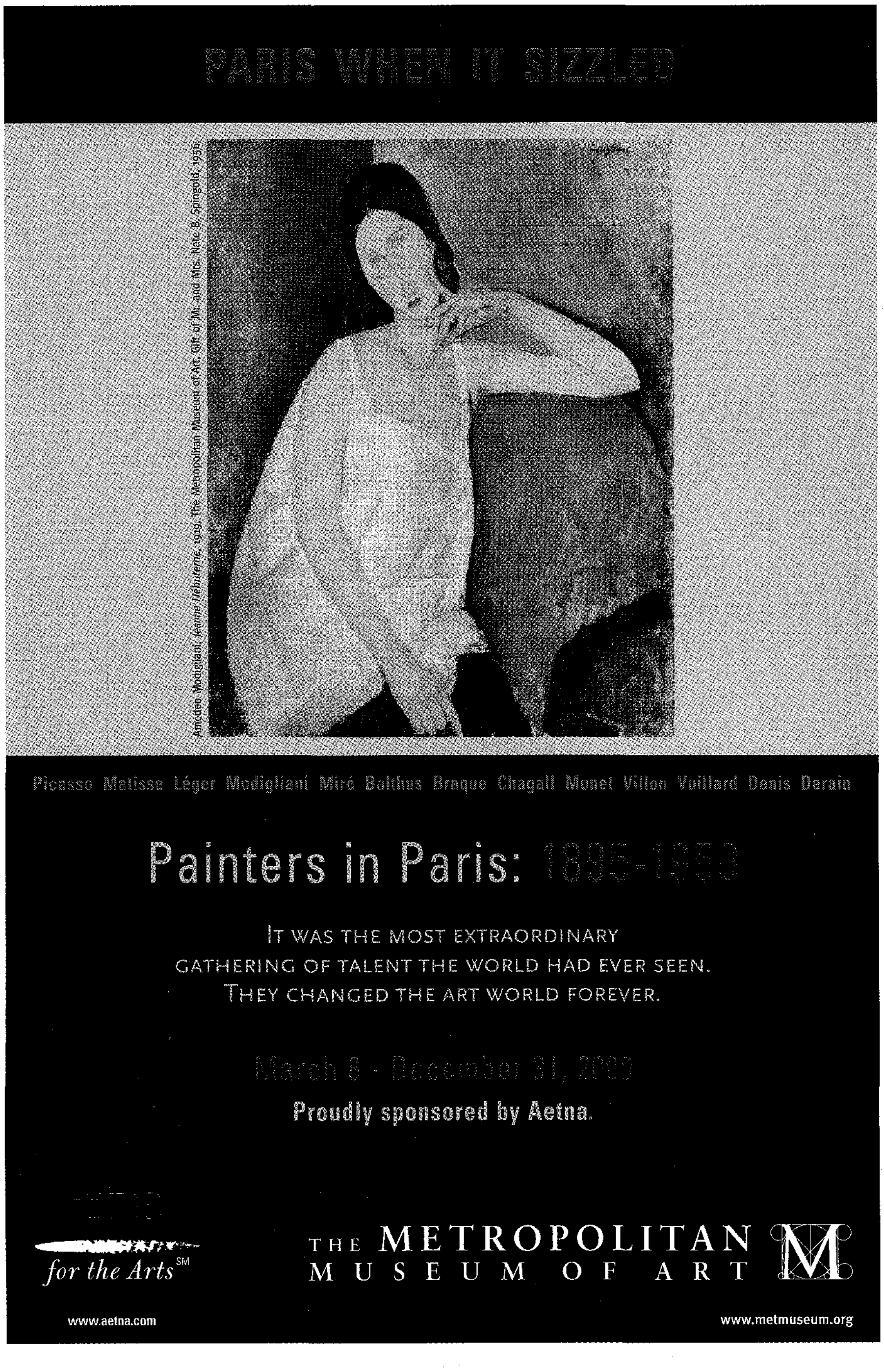
KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 24-25: **Grant-Lee Phillips.** The man behind Grant Lee Buffalo has slipped out from his unjustly overlooked band to record a homegrown album. The record, "Ladies' Love Oracle," is not, however, a stripped-down production—it's as richly textured and dynamic as

TABLES FOR TWO

RISTORANTE LA GROLLA
413 Amsterdam Ave. (496-0890)—Dining out on the Upper West Side has long been the equivalent of going to a college reunion: the rooms are packed, the conviviality is deafening, and the chatter is about everything but the food. This classy little newcomer is a refreshing antidote to the yappy yuppie hangouts that proliferate around West Seventy-Ninth Street—an elegantly minimal two rooms, painted a pleasing lemon yellow, where serious, audible conversation is possible over seriously edible food.

La Grolla—the name refers to a lidded wooden goblet used as a friendship cup—specializes in the hearty fare of the mountainous Valle d'Aosta, in Italy's northwest corner, which means that nearly everything comes cooked more slowly than is usual in a country that prides itself on speedy preparation. The best antipasti exploit the region's Alpine bounty—an earthy wild-mushroom ragout with grilled polenta, a silky carpaccio of venison with roasted red peppers. In "The Food of Italy," Waverly Root notes that the "sharpness of the [Aosta] climate is met by the heaviness of the food," and La Grolla turns out a wonderfully fortifying casserole of Savoy cabbage, whole-wheat bread, Fontina cheese, and beef consommé (with a mouthful of a name, *seupa valpellinentze*) and a rich and rustic ravioli filled with greens and herbs, in a walnut cream sauce. The peasanty main courses include a carbonada (marinated beef tenderloin with aged red wine and polenta), an expansive lamb shank with a compote of shallots and garlic, and a beautifully pan-roasted rainbow trout in an almond crust. Finish things off with a comforting vanilla *panna cotta* with fresh-fruit purée, helped along by a palate-scrubbing liqueur called Caravella Limoncello, and your reëntry onto the Amsterdam Avenue raceway will be considerably eased. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $13-$23.)

—Charles Michener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Amedeo Modigliani, *Jeanne Hébuterne*, 1919. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nate B. Spingold, 1956.

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any of his group's releases. The songs, mournful and heartbreaking, may be among the best he's ever written, and in performance Phillips's vocals, especially his lovely falsetto, combine with his iron-mesh guitar playing to create a mystical, almost reverent, atmosphere.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—March 23: Since former Wall of Voodoo front man **Stan Ridgway** turned off the Mexican radio, more than a decade ago, he's made a career of scoring films and turning out noirish solo albums, the latest of which is a delightfully dark and moody disk titled "Anatomy." March 25: If you can't get into the Femi Kuti show at Irving Plaza, check out the home-grown Afro-beat of Brooklyn's **Antibalas.**

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—March 24: The charmingly enigmatic singer Chan Marshall, who goes by the name **Cat Power,** has a new album titled "The Covers Record." Listening to her take on "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" is a nearly hypnotic experience. Her phrasing is so slow and personal that you'll hardly recognize the song (it doesn't help that she drops the chorus and central riff), but the effect, in the end, is remarkably pleasant. And by the time she reaches "Sea of Love," the last track on the disk, you may find yourself wondering if you haven't simply imagined listening to the record. March 25: **Stan Ridgway** (see Makor).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 22: The crisp, rootsy rock and roll of the **Blue Dogs,** who hail from Charleston, South Carolina, and got production help on their latest disk, "Letters from Round O," by Cracker front man David Lowery.

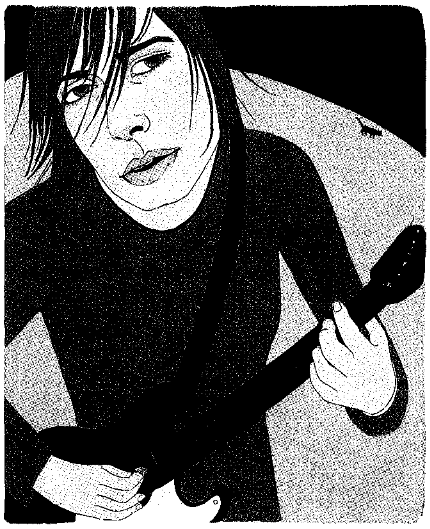
S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—March 24: **Henry (Pucho) Brown and the Latin Soul Brothers** turned out eight records between 1966 and 1969, and Brown played Carnegie Hall in 1967, but he spent the next two decades entertaining folks in the Catskills. In the early nineties, Brown became a cult figure in London, as the dance-music scene there picked up his old recordings. He's been touring overseas ever since, and now he's brought his funky brand of Latin soul back home. Dining.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 26: Some folks never get over high school, not the football-team glory of growing up, but the rage and frustration of adolescence. Al Johnson, the lead singer of the Chicago rock-and-roll quartet **U.S. Maple,** must be one of those people, judging from the band's latest release, "Talker." Johnson offers up twisted rhythms and discordant guitar riffs, very deliberately breaking as many rules as possible. Live, he's been known to take this to extremes, covering himself with paint and snatching at his audience's hair. Long live rock and roll!

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—March 23-25: The **Clark Terry** Quintet. Terry is a very funny guy and one of the most sophisticated flugelhorn players and trumpeters around. He came up through the big bands, notably Basie's and Ellington's (where he enjoyed a brilliant stint), and he has a personal style that blurs the lines between swing and its younger brother bop. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 26: **Herbie Hancock's** popular 1998 album, "Gershwin's World," paid tribute to a composer and pianist for whom Hancock obviously feels a great affinity. As Gershwin eagerly enriched his music with strains of classical, jazz, blues, and gospel music, so Hancock draws on everything from world music to electronica to enhance his jazz. In performance, Hancock may scale the tribute down—don't expect guest appearances by Joni Mitchell, or a detour into Ravel's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in G. But a spirited romp through "Cottontail" or any of the thousands of jazz tunes based on Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" will do just fine. Dining.


Cat Power, at Maxwell's.

LARA TOMLIN

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through March 26: A slew of second- and third-generation fusioneers are turning out to honor Weather Report, one of the more listenable of the early-seventies bands dedicated to mating jazz, rock, and R. & B., all in the name of art and commerce. On hand will be bassist **Mark Egan,** guitarist **Chuck Loeb,** and saxophonists **Eric Alexander** and **Steve Wilson,** among others. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—With its theatrical overtones and twenty-first-century savoir faire, this intimate venue may be the perfect place to experience **Kurt Elling** (here March 23-25), a post-modern jazz vocalist long on verbose excursions that can veer from spontaneous jazz-babble to Rilke and Neruda quotes.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 22: The **Willem Breuker Kollektie** is crazy like a fox. Trafficking in disciplined anarchy, these spectacularly skilled Dutchmen mate classical precision to free-jazz ideas and spice it all with Marx Brothers antics. They're irreverent, virtuosic, and downright funny.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—March 24-25: Top-shelf Latin jazz with trombonist **Papo Vazquez** and his band Pirates & Troubadours.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **Tommy Flanagan,** who winds up a two-week run with his trio on March 26. Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Were the paintings of the ancient Greeks finer than their sculptures? They thought so, but we'll never know for sure, since Apelles and his colleagues worked on wood panels that disintegrated millennia ago. But, thanks to the desert climate and the practice of funerary portraiture, examples of the lost Hel-

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lenistic tradition survived in Egypt. The seventy small portraits now on view in **"Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt,"** the result of a fusion of Greco-Roman technique and local religious belief, offer a fascinating spectrum of achievement, and of physiognomy. Painted in encaustic or tempera, on wood panels and linen wrappings, they range from cursory stylizations to masterly likenesses. At best, these sombre, bearded men seem perfectly contemporary: they could be staring at us from miniature teleconferencing screens, with a sound bite on their lips. Through May 7. ♦ **"Tilman Riemenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages."** Through May 14. ♦ **"Painters in Paris: 1895-1950"** presents more than a hundred modernist works from the museum's collection, by thirty-eight masters. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Walker Evans,"** a comprehensive retrospective, the photographer's first. Through May 14. ♦ **"The World of Scholar's Rocks."** Through Aug. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Making Choices,"** the second cycle in the "MOMA 2000" exhibition, covers 1920-1960, with nearly every room in the museum slated to focus on a separate aspect of the volatile period. This first phase of the three-part opening features galleries devoted to eleven shows, including "Art Is Arp," "Kahn's Modernist Monuments," "Man Ray, Photographer," "Paris Salon," and "War"—to be followed by fourteen more. Through July 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—With green laser beams ricocheting through a six-story waterfall, and hundreds of TV screens providing ambient noise and light, the Nam June Paik retrospective looks, from ground level, like a sure-fire crowd-pleaser. Instead it leaves one disenchanted and puzzled. For the most part, the father of video art comes off as an unexpectedly slight figure, a likable, playful avant-gardist whose imaginative resources have seldom matched his commitment to the idea of innovation. Through April 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Whitney **2000 Biennial Exhibition,** with ninety-seven artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, and installation and Internet artists, as well as videographers and filmmakers) chosen by a team of six curators, opens March 23. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The newly renovated Hayden Planetarium lets you enjoy a twenty-minute cosmic journey, narrated by Tom Hanks, which goes from Earth to the Milky Way out to the Virgo Supercluster, then through a black hole right back home. Reservations for regular Space Shows are advised, and available at 769-5200. ♦ **"Body Art: Marks of Identity."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo."** Edo, an earlier incarnation of Tokyo, has never looked better than in this lyrical series of ukiyo-e woodblock prints depicting everyday life in mid-nineteenth-century Japan. The installation is organized by season, and opens like a breath of fresh air with spring and its blooming plum trees. Hiroshige's trademark was the juxtaposition of a close-up detail with a distant landscape, an innovation that was borrowed by Western painters like Edgar Degas. In one of the most famous prints of the series, an eagle swoops above a snow-covered vista. In an earthier application, the hindquarters of a horse face the viewer as a harbor looms in the distance. This witty portrayal of the Yotsuya district, a "semi-official center of prostitution," underscores Hiroshige's infusion of classical subject matter with a distinctly modern sensibility. The English translation of *ukiyo-e* is "floating world," and after an hour in this show, you'll be floating, too. Through April 23. ♦ **"The Guennol Collection: Cabinet of Wonders."** Through May 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—**"The Little Black Dress and Other Signs of Status"** presents examples of the title outfit, from pious mourning gowns and ceremonial kimonos to a provocative Balenciaga cocktail dress. Through April 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—**"Paris in New York: French Jewish Artists in Private Collections."** A coincidental complement to the current "Painters in Paris" exhibition at the Met, this show features work by twelve Jewish artists working in the City of Light during the first third of the past century. On view are several first-rate paintings by Modigliani, including a dashing storm-gray portrait of Leon Indenbaum, in which he bears a weird resemblance to John Malkovich, and a charming example of Jacques Lipchitz's first brush with Cubism, a small painted wooden sculpture of a cellist. Sonia Delaunay, excluded from the Met roundup, also shines with "Philomène," a dour dowager whose grim expression is at odds with her portrait's gaudy palette. Through June 25. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

CZECH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND PIANIST

Sunday, March 26 3:00pm
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY, CONDUCTOR
Krasa: Symphonie
Mahler: Symphony No.7
Pre-concert lecture by Derek Katz and Jan Smaczny at 2:00, Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Monday, March 27 7:30pm
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY, CONDUCTOR AND PIANO
Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor K. 466
Janáček: Cunning Little Vixen Suite
Dvořák: Symphony No. 7
Pre-concert lecture by Michael Beckerman at 6:30, Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Wednesday, March 29 8:00pm
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY, CONDUCTOR
KURT NIKKANEN, VIOLIN
Mozart: Symphony No. 38, K.504 ("Prague")
Dvořák: Violin Concerto
Martinů: Piero della Francesca Frescoes
Tchaikovsky: Fantasy Overture to *Romeo and Juliet*
Pre-concert lecture by Michael Beckerman at 7:00, Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

"The tumultuous ovation given last night to the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra…acknowledged an interpretation that was both thrilling and distinctive."

—*The Telegraph*, September, 1998

Saturday, March 25 10:00am-1:00pm
The Prague Festival Symposium
MODERATED BY MICHAEL BECKERMAN
WITH JINDRICH TOMAN, DEREK KATZ, AND JAN SMACZNY
Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Rehearsal Studio
Enhancing our Czech Philharmonic performances, this symposium explores the rich cultural history of Prague and its central role for European music and musicians through the centuries.
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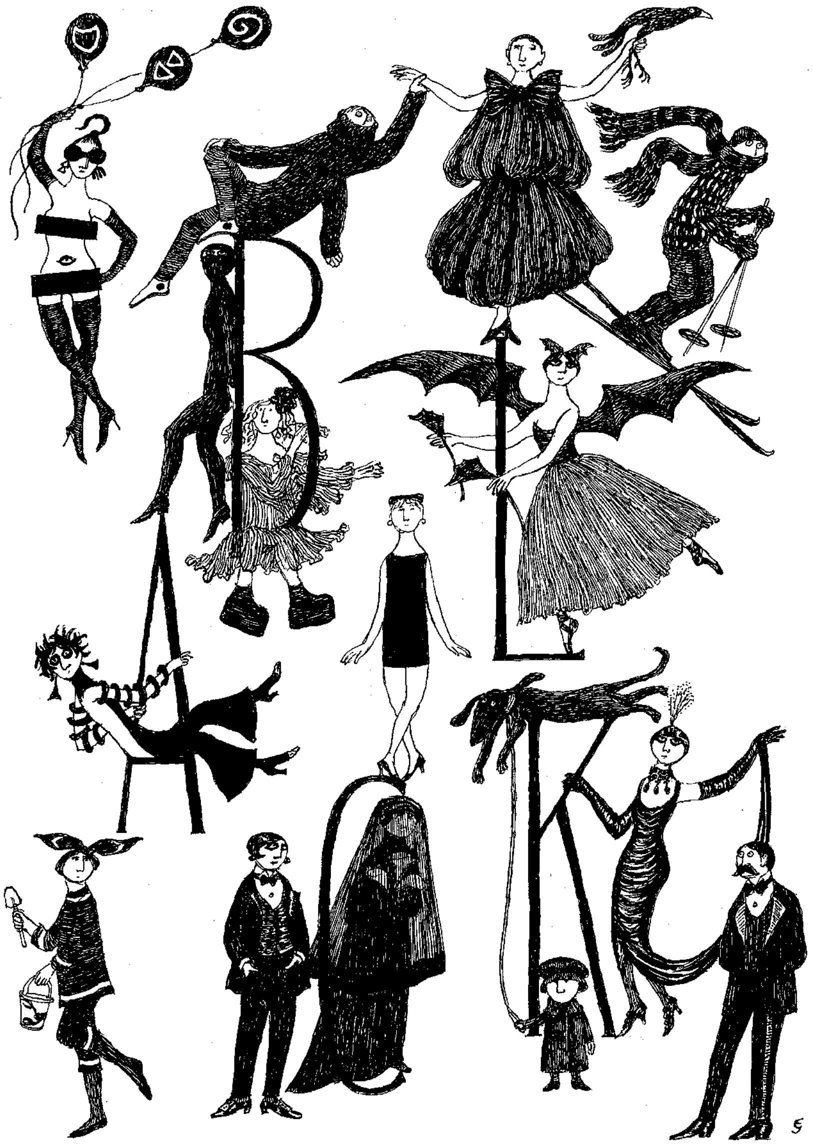


"The Little Black Dress and Other Signs of Status," at F.I.T.

EDWARD GOREY

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

GREGORY AMENOFF
The first New York show in seven years by a prominent painter of the nineteen-eighties. As big and ambitious as ever, Amenoff's latest works depict a stormy visionary coastline: waterfalls tumble down to primordial oceans, and rings of incandescent blossoms hover in the air, like U.F.O.s seeding the planet with DNA. Amenoff has certainly picked an unusual genre—call it Precambrian Romanticism—but the paintings themselves are marred by a frequently drab, perfunctory execution, full of borrowings from the very artists (especially Albert Pinkham Ryder and Marsden Hartley) whose influence Amenoff has been struggling to outgrow. Through March 25. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

MAURIZIO CATTELAN
This Italian artist is emerging as the art world's designated jester. His new work at Marian Goodman is a seven-foot-tall, painted polyester-styrene elephant wearing a white sheet with eyeholes and a trunk hole crudely cut out. The beast's painted eyes look through you with a pachydermal thousand-yard stare, eloquently abashed—henceforth you will not forget that a shy elephant makes for a really tremendous quantity of shyness. Through March 25. (24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

ANSEL KRUT
The New York début of this South African-born painter features an enchanted menagerie: pumpkin-headed puppets, pig-snouted mermaids, fairies, giants, and a bird with a lovely, silvery human face, like that of a Goya countess. In a barren terrain, lit by shafts of dungeony sunlight, these fanciful creatures indulge in masques or games whose meaning we're left to piece together for ourselves. Though the show is called "Exemplary Tales," it's not so much Krut's coy narrative gestures as it is his deft painterly ones that seem exemplary. Through April 8. (Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665.)

GERHARD RICHTER
Blurry, photo-based works from the sixties and seventies by this enormously influential German painter. The principal pleasures here are three paintings of women: a cheerful bathing beauty astride a donkey, a hausfrau taking her terrier for a walk, and a demure blonde, clad in nothing but black panties and boots, who seems to be posing reluctantly for some fetish pornographer. Richter's trick—smearing the wet paint horizontally with a fan brush—gives the images a melted, numinous look that highlights and softens their banality. It's a short step from here to contemporary ironists like John Currin. Through April 22. (Zwirner Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.)

"AMERICAN VENUS"
This introduction to the life and work of model Audrey Munson (1891-1996) is more art history than art, but it makes for great drama: Munson, who wanted to be a dancer, became a sculptor's model and, during a civic statuary boom of the teens and twenties, the unofficial figurehead of New York. Her heroic likeness still welcomes visitors from various city gates and monuments (the Manhattan Bridge, Grand Army Plaza, Columbus Circle). She also ran an early "Who Wants to Marry a Model?" media campaign, then checked herself into an upstate mental institution, where she remained from 1931 until her death. Through March 30. (Arsenal, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. 360-8163.)

"DESTRUCTION/CREATION"
As this enthusiastic group exhibition reminds us, the world is full of banal household objects waiting—at the first touch of a crowbar, razor blade, or backhoe—to become art works. Among the many examples of this happy, albeit glib, transformation are a former piano, sofa, typewriter, tricycle, dictionary, cowboy film, and Andy Warhol screen print. Perhaps the most dramatic is Jeffrey Wisniewski's 1992 "Chipped House," a collection of drawings and color photographs that document the metamorphosis of a suburban dwelling into a huge pile of kindling. Through April 22. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

Short List

NANCY GRAVES
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through April 20.
PHILIP GUSTON
McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.
Through April 5.
YVONNE JACQUETTE
DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
247-2119. Through April 15.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

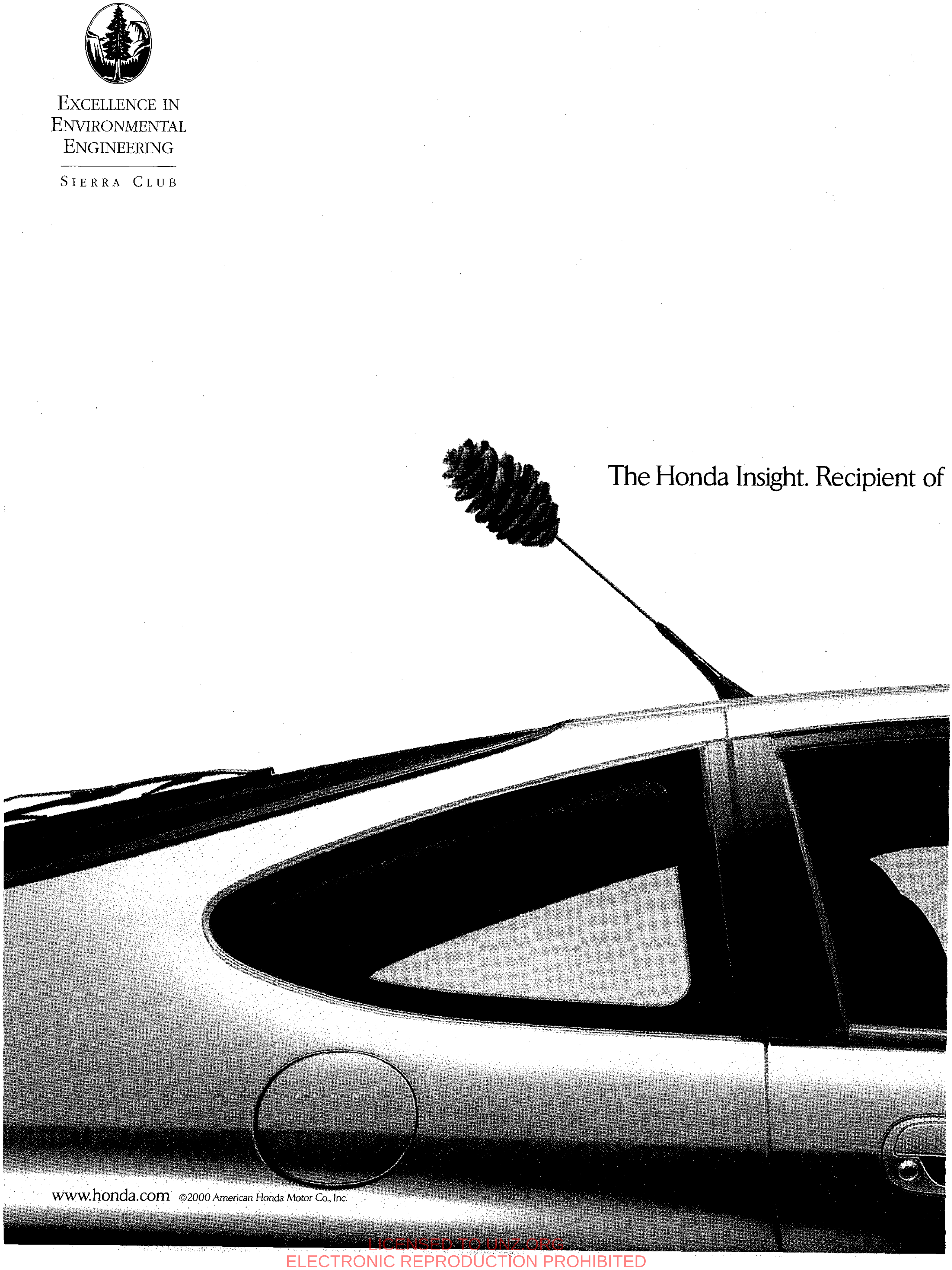
"THE ANITA PALLENBERG STORY"
"Wayne's World" meets the art world in a mockumentary video collaboration between feminist critic Laura Cottingham and underground-film maker Leslie Singer. Inside-joke casting—gallery owner Gavin Brown plays the Rolling Stones' manager, and collector-cum-software magnate Peter Norton has a cameo as a pizza-delivery boy—is intercut with original concert footage and excerpts from films by Fassbinder and Robert Frank. Cottingham, as Mick Jagger, seems to be channelling Norma Desmond; at seventy-seven minutes, the rambling non-narrative wears thin. Call for screening times. Through March 25. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

Short List

RITA ACKERMANN
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through April 15.
RENEE GREEN
Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through
April 8.
JOSIAH MC ELHENY
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.
Through March 25.
UGO RONDINONE
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-2000.
Through April 15.
DAN WALSH
Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through April 15.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

CHRISTINE BORLAND
The glass pendulums that Borland has hung over her viewers each hold a few cups of water and a bleached leaf from a plane tree under which Hip-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pocrates purportedly taught. But the strongest works here are more forthrightly medical: a row of delicate blue-and-white-glazed bone-china models of the female pelvic bone include matching fetal skulls in more and less dangerous birthing positions. Across the room, a video rig shows the continuous division of commercially acquired HeLa cells, cultivated from the tissue of Henrietta Lacks, whose genetic abnormality (resulting in ongoing cell growth outside the body) was discovered as she was dying of cancer almost fifty years ago. Through April 22. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

KELLY LAMB
In a back-room video, a geisha disrobes in slow motion, fading out layer by layer, and only returning to view as she covers up again. In front, Lamb's snapshots of Bunnies at Playboy's millennium party offer examples of a more down-home sexuality. Though the Bunny who gets the most attention wears a hip-level button that says Kelly, the peekaboo artist is nowhere in sight. Perhaps she was run off by Fred, the gallery's fierce resident pooch. Through April 1. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455.)

Short List

LUCIO FONTANA
Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685.
Through March 25.

JUDY FOX / KATHARINE KUHARIC
P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.
Both shows through March 25.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Asia week continues on New York's auction-and-antiques scene. March 22: Indian and Southeast Asian art works. ♦ March 23: Japanese and Korean works. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.) ♦ Note: Through April 2, Christie's is exhibiting important pieces—none of them for sale—from three major Chinese institutions: the Capital Museum, Beijing Art Museum, and Ding Ling Museum.) ♦ At Christie's East: March 22: European decorative arts. ♦ March 28: Nineteenth-century art of a generally academic persuasion. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0430.)

SOTHEBY'S
March 22: Chinese ceramics, jades, and works in other media, including an unusual group of approximately eighty snuff bottles. ♦ March 23: Indian and Southeast Asian art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

DOYLE
An auction of furniture, decorative pieces, and paintings, including a selection of Asian decorative art works. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. March 22.)

INTERNATIONAL ASIAN ART FAIR
An important gathering of international dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. March 24-29, with a benefit preview on March 23. For information, call 642-8572.)

ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW
Eighty-one exhibitors from thirteen countries offer a wide range of Asian art works and artifacts. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. March 23-26. For information, call 683-2434.)

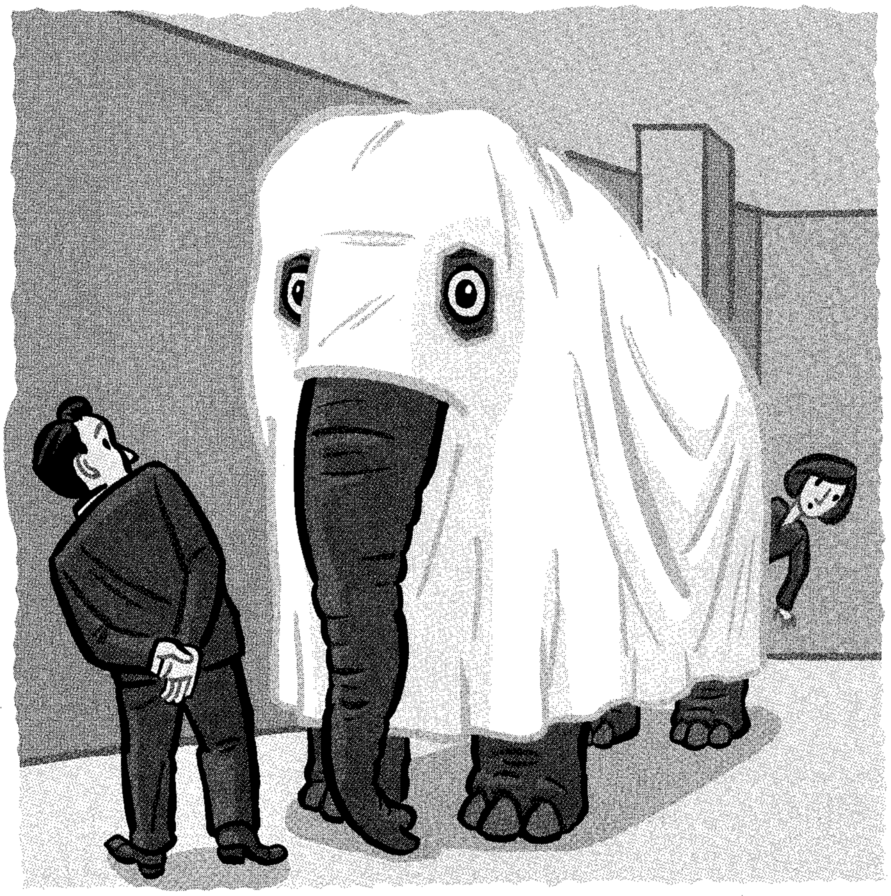
TRIPLE PIER EXPO
Six hundred dealers move in for the second of two weekends. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th and 52nd Sts. March 25-26. For information, call 255-0020.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ELLEN BROOKS
These color ink-jet prints of indoor and outdoor blanket forts immediately recall the concealment and comfort of childhood retreats. In the adult space of this small gallery, their dappled light and solitary air create a similar serenity. Through April 1. (Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450.)

CHUCK CLOSE
Recent portraits of artists and actors hang here alongside Close's new daguerreotypes. Several eight-by-ten self-portraits solidly reclaim M. Daguerre's medium for this century, but the nude diptychs, showing the fronts and backs of various tattooed and wrinkled torsos, make the best use of its flawed glow. Through April 22. (Pace MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

DANNY LYON
In 1967 Lyon was granted unrestricted access to the Texas State prison system. For the next fourteen months, he took full advantage of that opportunity, documenting the lives of inmates and their jailers. Some of the resulting work was published in his acclaimed 1971 "Conversations with the Dead," long since out of print. The current exhibition includes more than fifty prints, some never before seen. Lyon's ability to get comfortable with his subjects and make them comfortable with him makes this an illuminating, sensitive view of a harsh, hidden world. Through April 22. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)



Maurizio Cattelan's "Not Afraid of Love," at the Marian Goodman gallery.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

TRACEY MOFFATT
The bad news is that the latest work by this Australian star has none of the punch of last spring's "Laudanum" series; for all the big-budget special effects, these photos (of subjects including an oiled-up couple groping through the desert and a little girl dodging trees with eyes) look like dime-a-dozen Photoshop stunts. The good news is that Moffatt completely reinvents her subject, format, and technique for each project, so this wan psychedelia is unlikely to appear again. She has also commissioned a video whose finale is a compilation of Hollywood's most histrionic scenes of paintings being slashed and sculptures being smashed. This wonderfully silly, adrenaline-charged desecration of art is a refreshing way to end a day in Chelsea. Through April 8. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

JAMES RAVILIOUS / HUMPHREY SPENDER
Two British documentarians, working decades apart, show "The Landscape and People of England" glowing in that country's characteristic cloudy, diffuse light. Both shows through April 8. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

LOUIS ROBERT
Rare and beautiful paper negatives and prints of portraits, architecture, and landscapes from an early (1810-1882) and little-known French photographic master, shown together for the first and likely last time in New York. Through April 15. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

"KRAPPY KAMERA"
Leicas are outlawed at SoHo Photo's second and now annual competition. This "Happy Krappy Year" is full of surprising, dreamy, and often gorgeous photographs, made with pinhole, Diana, Holga, and other low-tech cameras. Downstairs, Richard Zalk's image of roadside flowers is as kaleidoscopic and kinetic as a pair of Marsha Brady's pants. Upstairs, Paula E. Campbell's "Dream," a miragelike black-and-white print, merges a foot, a door, and a road with surf into a single composition. Through April 1. (SoHo Photo, 15 White Street. 226-8571. Open Thursdays, 1-8; Fridays through Sundays, 1-6.)

"VANITAS PERSONAE"
These pictures of "the Self and Other Related Characters" were taken by an eclectic group of art-world luminaries, including Magritte, Sophie Calle, Mariko Mori, and the buxom exhibitionist Valerie Monroe Shakespeare. Through April 1. (Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)

Short List

WALTER CHAPPELL
Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 719-9067.
Through April 1.

STANLEY GREENBERG / JULIUS SHULMAN
Yancey Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.
Both shows through April 8.

E. O. HOPPÉ
Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.
Through April 22.

ED KASHI
SABA, 116 E. 16th St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 10-6; Saturdays, by appointment. 477-7722. Through April 6.

MARY ELLEN MARK
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through April 22.

ORIT RAFF
Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through April 8.

GARY SCHNEIDER / "THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF 'FORTUNE' MAGAZINE"
International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6. Schneider show through April 9; *Fortune* show through May 14.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Das Rheingold," in performances that open the company's presentation of the complete "Der Ring des Nibelungen"; with Hei-Kyung Hong, Hanna Schwarz, Birgitta Svendén, Philip Langridge, Graham Clark, James Morris, and Ekkehard Wlaschicha; conducted by James Levine. (March 22 at 8 and March 25 at 2.) ♦ **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Sonia Ganassi, Michael Schade, Thomas Hampson, John Del Carlo, and Egils Silins; Bruno Campanella. (March 23 at 8.) ♦ With Carmen Oprisanu, Paul Austin Kelly, Russell Braun, Paul Plishka, and Vladimir Ognovenko; Mr. Campanella. (March 27 at 8.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Leontina Vaduva (in her greatly anticipated début with the company), Ainhoa Arteta, Luis Lima, and Simon Keenlyside; Marco Armiliato. (March 24 at 8.) ♦ **"Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk,"** by Shostakovich, with Catherine Malfitano, Vladimir Galouzine, Mark Baker, and Sergei Koptchak; Valery Gergiev. (March 25 at 8.) ♦ **"Die Walküre,"** the towering "second chapter" of Wagner's tetralogy, with Jane Eaglen (as Brünnhilde), Deborah Voigt (as Sieglinde), Ms. Schwarz, Plácido Domingo, and Mr. Morris; Mr. Levine. (March 28 at 6:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
March 23 and March 28 at 7:30: Virgil Thomson's "The Mother of Us All," spotlighting soprano Lauren Flanigan in the role of Susan B. Anthony. ♦ March 24 at 8: "Tosca." ♦ March 25 at 1:30 and 8: "Porgy and Bess." ♦ March 26 at 1:30: "La Clemenza di Tito." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
At Avery Fisher Hall, Valery Gergiev conducting. March 22 at 8: Scriabin's "The Poem of Ecstasy," Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Leif Ove Andsnes), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 (the "Pastoral"). ♦ March 23 at 8, March 24-25 at 2, and March 28 at 7:30: Hindemith's Concerto for French Horn (featuring Philip Myers, the orchestra's principal French hornist) and Tchaikovsky's "Manfred" Symphony. (875-5030.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA
Dennis Keene directs Bach's B-Minor Mass. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 22 at 8.)

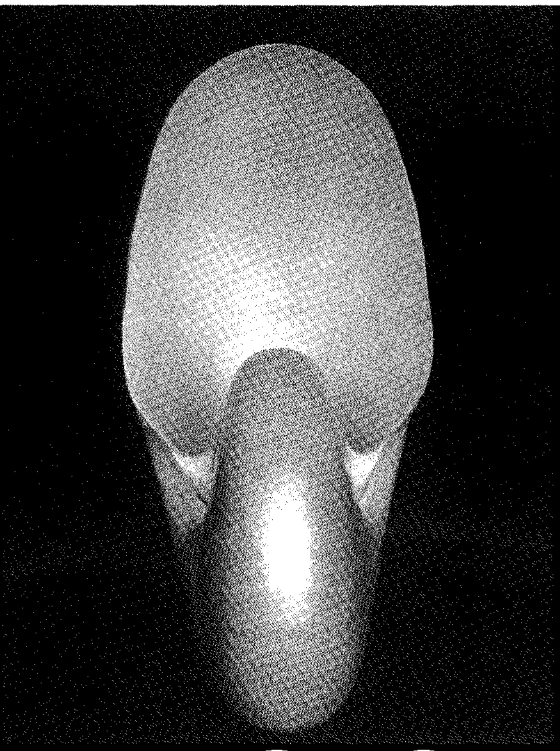
MOSCOW SOLOISTS
Yuri Bashmet leads the string ensemble (and doubles as viola soloist) in a program that includes Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings and Shostakovich's Sinfonia for Viola and Strings in B-Flat Minor (which is a transcription of his String Quartet No. 13, effected by André Tchaikovsky—no relation to guess who). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 23 at 8.)

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT
Gil Rose leads three works by Bernard Rands: his "Canti Lunatici," "Canti dell'Eclisse," and "Canti del Sole" (the last having earned its composer a Pulitzer Prize, in 1984). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 23 at 8.)

NEW YORK POPS
Skitch Henderson conducts "La Vie Parisienne" (Manuel Rosenthal's much loved confection of Offenbach tunes) in addition to a centennial tribute to Kurt Weill (with singer Ute Lemper). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 24 at 8.)

"WALL TO WALL KURT WEILL"
At Symphony Space, dozens of soloists and ensembles gather for a continuous twelve-hour celebration of the composer's varied œuvre, from his early "classical" compositions of German Expressionism to his works for the Broadway stage. Here are some highlights. March 25 at 11 A.M.: The day's opening segment includes his String Quartet (played by the Flux String Quartet), his "Mahagonny Songspiel," pieces performed by the Klezmatics and the Hudson Shad, and readings (by Teresa Stratas and Isaiah Sheffer) from the correspondence between Weill and Lotte Lenya. ♦ At 2: "Das Berliner Requiem" (with the Riverside Choral Society), cabaret selections (with singer Mary Cleere Haran and pianist Richard Rodney Bennett), and a concert performance of his opera "Down in the Valley," among other works. ♦ At 5: Performances by many Broadway stars. ♦ At 8:30: The Juilliard Opera Center presents selections from "Der Kuhhandel," and John Mauceri conducts the New York Chamber Symphony in selections from "The Threepenny Opera," "The Seven Deadly Sins," "One Touch of Venus," "Love Life," and other shows, featuring various singers. (Broadway at 95th St. No tickets necessary.)

MOSCOW VIRTUOSI
Vladimir Spivakov conducts Schnittke's "Five Fragments Based on Paintings of Hieronymus Bosch" and doubles as soloist in the same composer's Sonata for Viola and Chamber Orchestra. Completing the program are Mozart's Symphony No. 29 and his "Coro-



Edward Weston, *Chambered Nautilus*, 1927. Silver print. The Lane Collection.

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nation" Mass in C Major (K. 317), with the Dessoff Choirs. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 25 at 8.)

ENSEMBLE SOSPESO
Presenting an all-Ligeti program. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 25 at 8.)

CZECH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
At Avery Fisher Hall, Vladimir Ashkenazy conducts the first two performances of a three-concert series. March 26 at 3: Hans Krása's Symphony (featuring mezzo-soprano Charlotte Hellekant) and Mahler's Symphony No. 7. ♦ March 27 at 7:30: Mozart's D-Minor Piano Concerto (with Mr. Ashkenazy doubling as soloist), a suite from Janáček's opera "The Cunning Little Vixen," and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7. (875-5030. The series concludes on March 29.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
David Robertson conducts Weill's "Kleine Dreigroschenmusik," Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 (with violinist Nicolaj Znaider), and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 28 at 8.)

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG CHOIR
Erwin Ortner directs this Viennese ensemble in the première of Brian Ferneyhough's "The Doctrine of Similarity," Schoenberg's "De Profundis" and "Friede auf Erden," and numerous short pieces by Schubert. The assisting artists include soprano Juliane Banse, mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, tenor Michael Schade, baritone Russell Braun, and pianist Maurizio Pollini. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. March 28 at 8. For information about tickets, call 247-7800.)

VOX VOCAL ENSEMBLE
One of the more charming cognominal byways of music history involves the Flemish Renaissance composer Jacob Clement, also known as Jacobus Clemens, who lived from about 1510 to about 1556 (the dates at both ends being rather hazy). A prolific producer of masses, motets, and songs—including a nearly complete set of metrical Psalms, in Flemish—he spent much of his career in church posts, including appointments at Bruges and 's Hertogenbosch, until his death from some unspecified act of violence. At least in his later years, he became known as Clemens non Papa. It is widely accepted that the composer assumed this nickname (which might be translated as "Clemens Not-the-Pope") to keep people from confusing him with the partially contemporaneous Pope Clemens VII. One imagines, however, that only the most unobservant parties could possibly have fallen into such confusion, and that the unlikelihood would have increased following the Pope's death, in 1534 (which, it appears, is when the nickname started to stick). The whole business could well be nothing more than an enduring ecclesiastical joke. In this concert, George Steele directs five motets by Clemens and another five by the Spanish composer Sebastian de Vivánco, who followed Clemens half a century later. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, enter at Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 28 at 8.)

MUSICA VIVA ORCHESTRA
Four organists are featured in concerted works, in a concert spotlighting the Holtkamp organ of All Souls Unitarian Church: William Trafka (of St. Bartholomew's Church), in Poulenc's Organ Concerto; Ulrich Meldau (of the Kirche Enge in Zurich), in Alfredo Casella's neoclassical "Concerto Romano" (from 1926); and Justin Bischof (of the Church of the Resurrection) and Ken Cowan (of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin), in the première of Aaron Miller's "Concerto for Two Organists and Orchestra," which may be the first concerto ever written for two players at one console. Walter Klauss conducts. (Lexington Ave. at 80th St. 794-3646. March 28 at 8.)

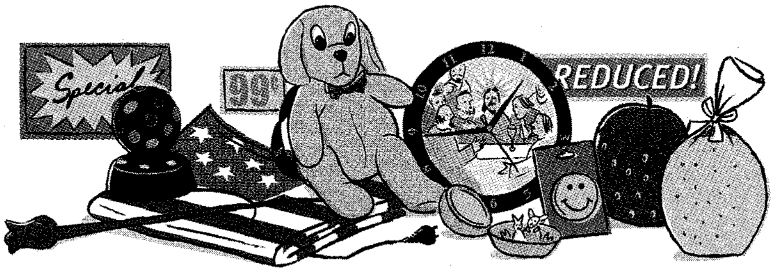
RECITALS

JESSYE NORMAN
The soprano's program includes a new work by Judith Weir, in addition to Ravel's "Chansons Madécasses" and Schoenberg's "Cabaret Songs." The Orchestra of St. Luke's backs her up, and David Robertson conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 22 at 7:30.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

99 Cents for Your Thoughts

A few short years from now, the discount stores around Herald and Union Squares will likely have gone the way of bootblacks and haberdashers. But for now, these places offer sanctuary to a wildly eclectic assortment of items that range, on any given day, from spatulas to snow globes, paper towels to pinafores, and give new meaning to the word "discount."


Special!
99¢
REDUCED!

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

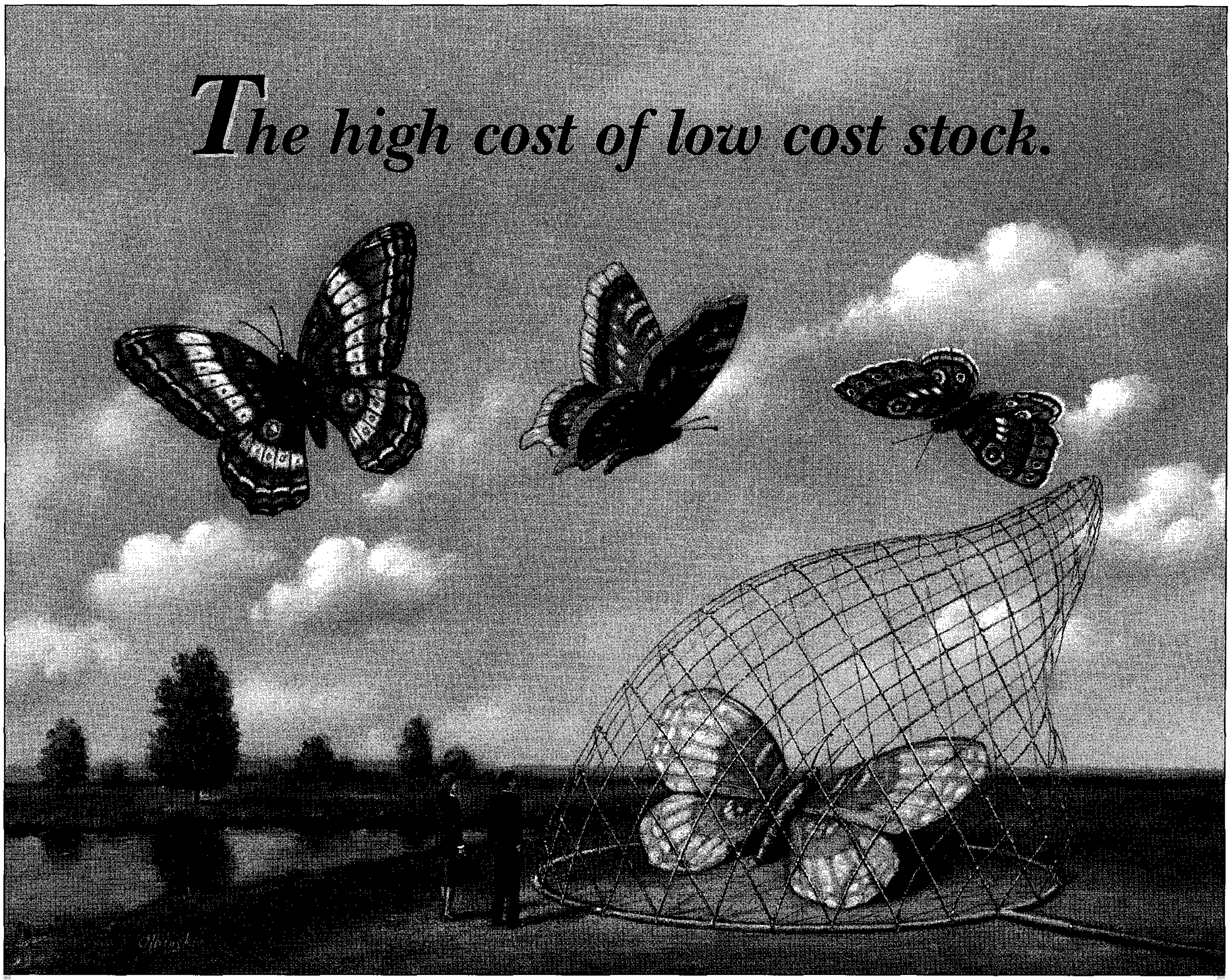
Much of the merchandise at **DEE & DEE** (22 W. 14th St.; 243-5621) seems to have found its way here from the late Woolworth's. Fruit- and flower-printed dinner plates that might have graced Alice Kramden's table are $1.49; matching bowls—well, they match at least some of the patterns—are $1 each. Bow-bedecked slippers employ a similar floral theme, with a checkered pattern that recalls nineteen-forties oilcloth ($3.99). More stylish mules of black mesh sprinkled with hot-pink sequinned blossoms are the same price; either pair would survive a transplant to the patio of a summer cottage. In the same building, **AMERICAN VALUE CENTERS** (627-1555) offers life-size pear, grapefruit, and strawberry candles that would also liven up a moonlit veranda ($4.99).

Slightly further uptown, **THE BAG MAN** (261 W. 34th St.; 502-5452) is full of the kind of merchandise one expects from a really good discounter: crystal flowers that recall the Little Shop of Horrors ($3.99), a spinning black plastic disco light ($8.99), place mats adorned with cherubim (69 cents), a liquid-soap dispenser that gives the illusion of fake tropical fish swimming in the bottom of the bottle ($4.99), and an American-flag beach towel almost Warholian in its stark simplicity ($6.99). The everpresent icon of the bargain store, Leonardo's "Last Supper," appears on both a circular wall clock ($5.99) and inside a snow globe, whose miniature disciples betray no surprise at encountering a blizzard indoors, in Jerusalem ($2.99).

Around the corner at **WEBER'S CLOSEOUT** (116 W. 32nd St.; 564-4545), there's a plush dog backpack with moony eyes that could prove powerfully distracting in a second-grade classroom ($5). A slightly older child might prefer a Burberry-ish faux-silk scarf cheered up with a passel of teddy bears ($3.99). Next door, **JACK'S** (110 W. 32nd St.; 268-9962) has a two-tier price system echoed in its architecture: the lower floor is for items 99 cents or less, the second floor's things exceed $1. A yellow smiley-face night-light is 99 cents; so is a gold vinyl cigarette case, the very kind of thing that used to accompany leathery smokers of a certain age.

Upstairs, Easter merchandise has taken possession of the center aisle. A plaster egg opens to reveal two dignified bunnies ($2.99). Another rabbit has donned a tutu and a pair of lace-up ballet slippers and is offering its services as a finger puppet ($1.99). Yet another floppy-eared creature is ensconced in a globe that showers emerald-colored glitter and plays "Easter Parade" ($3.99). A pale-green carryall on a high peg eases up on the Easter mascots in favor of a more general vernal enthusiasm: it is decorated with a reproduction of a French *Vogue* cover circa 1925 which depicts a damsel in an umbrella-skirted frock poised beneath a curtain of magnolias ($3.99). Though it's unlikely Erté ever envisioned his masterpiece decorating a tote bag seventy-odd years later, he might not have been displeased to see it swinging from the arm of a young lady with plenty of taste and not much money.

—*Lynn Yaeger*


The high cost of low cost stock.

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CINEMATIC GLASS
At the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Philip Glass Ensemble plays his soundtracks for several films, which will be screened. March 22 at 7:30: "Koyaanisqatsi." ♦ March 23-24 at 7:30: "Powaqqatsi." ♦ March 25 at 7:30 and March 26 at 3: "Dracula." (30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

FESTIVAL CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY
Four of the group's members collaborate in a program that comprises Saint-Saëns's Bassoon Sonata, Prokofiev's D-Major Violin Sonata (Op. 92a, the composer's own transcription of his Flute Sonata), and Brahms's B-Major Piano Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 22 at 8.)

AVALON STRING QUARTET
The youthful foursome on the rise offers quartets by Haydn (in E-Flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, the "Joke") and Beethoven (in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2), in addition to Janáček's Quartet No. 2, subtitled "Intimate Letters." The last is an autobiographical work that encodes details of the affair the aging Janáček was having with Kamila Stösslová, the much younger object of his extramarital affections. Their relationship had grown completely obsessive by the time the composer wrote this piece, in 1928 (within months of his death): in addition to depicting her in this musical testament, Janáček had also begun to keep a private "Kamila Diary" the same year. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 22 at 8.)

STEPHEN MAYER
The pianist performs a recital of works of an ecstatic or mystical persuasion: excerpts from Stravinsky's "Firebird" (in Guido Agosti's solo transcription), Kaikhosru Sorabji's "Le Jardin Parfumé," Szymanowski's "L'Île des Sirènes," and Charles Tomlinson Griffes's Sonata. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 22 at 8.)

"SQUEEZEPLAY"
The avant-garde accordionist Guy Klucevsek collaborates with choreographers David Dorfman and Claire Porter, performance artists Dan Froot and Dan Hurlin, filmmaker Victoria Marks, and composer Mary Ellen Childs in a program of vignettes that explore the relationships between music and the other arts. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 22-25 at 8. Through April 1.)

BARGEMUSIC
March 23 at 7:30 and March 26 at 4: Fred Sherry plays Bach's Suite No. 3 for Unaccompanied Cello, and colleagues join him for string quartets by Mozart (in D Major, K. 575) and Artur Schnabel. The last is a rarely played curiosity by the eminent Austrian turned American pianist (1882-1951), who was particularly admired as an interpreter of Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms. Though Schnabel's acclaim as a performer always overshadowed his reputation as a modernist composer, his slim list of published works includes three symphonies and an orchestral rhapsody, a piano concerto, and five string quartets, of which the piece offered in this concert was the fourth. ♦ March 24-25 at 7:30: The Brentano String Quartet plays Mozart's Adagio and Fugue in C Minor (K. 546), in addition to quartets by Beethoven (in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3, plus his "Grosse Fuge," Op. 133) and Schubert (in A Minor, D. 804). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

VOGLER STRING QUARTET OF BERLIN
This foursome came together in 1985 at the Hanns Eisler Institute, in what was then East Berlin, and only a year later was honored with the first prize (plus a a special prize for its interpretation of contemporary music) at the prestigious International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. In this fifteenth-anniversary concert, the ensemble plays Haydn's G-Major Quartet (Op. 76, No. 1) and Wolf's "Italian Serenade," in addition to Beethoven's Quartet in B-Flat Major (Op. 130) and his "Grosse Fuge." (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. March 24 at 8.)

ALEXANDER AND DAYKIN
The duo pianists perform Bach's "The Art of Fugue." (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. March 25 at 2.)

MARTHA ARGERICH
The pianist performs Bach's C-Minor Partita, Chopin's "Barcarolle," and Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 7, and is joined by colleagues for chamber works, including Schumann's Piano Quintet (with the Juilliard String Quartet) and the two-piano version of Ravel's "La Valse" (with Nelson Freire assisting). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 25 at 8.)

MACHAUT FESTIVAL
The second of three installments in the Cloisters' Guillaume de Machaut festival, scheduled to coincide with the seven-hundredth anniversary of the poet-composer's birth (give or take a few years, since firm documentation about his origins is lacking). March 26 at 1: Elizabeth A. R. Brown, formerly of Brooklyn College, discusses the political and religious milieus of fourteenth-century France. ♦ At 1 and 3: Lionheart, a men's early-music vocal sextet, presents a program of Machaut's love songs and poetry. (Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290.)

SIMON KEENLYSIDE
The English baritone, assisted by pianist Malcolm Martineau, offers songs by Schubert, Schumann, Strauss, Britten (his "Songs and Proverbs of William Blake"), Fauré, and Debussy. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 26 at 2.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES
Members of the orchestra, plus a few guests, perform a trio sonata by Bach, Mendelssohn's Piano Quartet in B Minor (Op. 3), Copland's Piano Quartet, and Franz Hasenöhrl's quintet arrangement of Strauss's ultrafamiliar "Till Eulenspiegel," charmingly titled "Till Eulenspiegel Einmal Anders!" ("Till Eulenspiegel Yet Again!"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 26 at 3.)

SUSAN NARUCKI AND ALAN FEINBERG
The soprano and the pianist perform a wide-ranging program of twentieth-century American songs, piano solos, and readings. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 26 at 3.)

MOSCOW STRING QUARTET
Performing quartets by Borodin (his First), Ravel, and Stravinsky (his "Three Pieces"). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 26 at 5.)

CLARINET COUPLE
The husband-and-wife team of Stanley and Naomi Drucker—he being the longtime principal clarinettist of the New York Philharmonic, she a founding member of the American Chamber Ensemble—perform (among other works) Mendelssohn's Konzertstücke No. 1 and No. 2 and Poulenc's Sonata for Two Clarinets. Pianist Kazuko Hayami assists. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. March 27 at 8.)

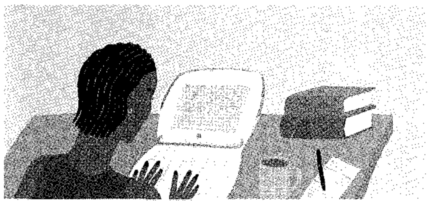
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
March 26 at 2: By poets J. D. McClatchy, Mary Jo Falter, and Daniel Hall, from their contributions to the newly published "Everyman's Anthology of Poems About Birds." (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200.) ♦ March 27 at 7:30: By actors Robert Sean Leonard, David Strathairn, Penny Fuller, and Mary Louise Wilson, from the writings of Colette. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 399-3030.) ♦ March 27 at 7:30: By Andre Dubus III, Fred Leebron, and Elizabeth Strout, from their fiction. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 27 at 8: By poet Brenda Shaughnessy and novelist David Baratier, from their work. (St. Marks In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ March 28 at 8: By Elissa Schappell, from her novel, "Use Me"; Tim Geary, from his novel "Shouting at the Ship Men"; *New Yorker* writer John Seabrook, from his book on popular culture, "Nobrow"; and Donald Antrim, from his novel "The Verificationist." (Halo, 49 Grove St. For reservations, which are required, call 243-8885.)

TALKS
March 22 at 6:30: Environmental artist James Turrell talks about his work. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 23 at 5: Artist Susanna Coffey discusses the human figure. (New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St. 966-0300.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Sister Act



In the wake of Black History Month and in the midst of Women's History Month, there's a trio of new books that reflect the changing experience of black American women.

IOLA LEROY (Beacon), written by Frances E. W. Harper in 1892 and recently reprinted, is one of the first novels by an African-American woman. Steeped in plantation dialect, it tells the story of a blue-eyed daughter of the antebellum South who only learns she is part black upon her father's death. Iola dodges slave traders, becomes a nurse, marries a doctor, and arrives at a heightened consciousness. If her father had lived, she reflects, "I would have had a life of careless ease and pleasure. But now my life has a much grander significance."

Eden, the heroine of Shay Youngblood's **BLACK GIRL IN PARIS** (Riverhead), longs for the City of Light to reinvent her, as it did Langston Hughes, Josephine Baker, and James Baldwin. When she isn't working on her writing career, Eden works as an au pair and an artist's model. "Pretend that you are a bowl of fruit," an artist tells her, as she nervously prepares to pose nude. Eden thinks, "I am a banquet and they are hungry mouths. My face a bowl of strawberries, my mouth a slice of melon." Eden does eventually meet Baldwin, but she learns more from a raconteur named Indego, who tells her, "When Europeans were still living in caves, Africans had already created rich kingdoms."

Pride and self-invention are also at the heart of **LADIES FIRST** (Quill), a memoir by the rapper Queen Latifah. Born Dana Owens in Newark, Latifah went on to become one of the first female rap stars and used her platform to empower younger women—or queens, as she calls them. "If you don't feel like a bitch," Latifah preaches, "no one can call you that and make it stick."

—*Liesl Schillinger*

CLAUDIA PEARSON

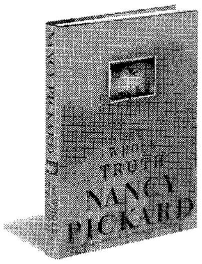
Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Solving the Mystery of What to Read

THE WHOLE TRUTH

by Nancy Pickard



A psychopath beyond compare is accused of the murder of a young girl, but true-crime writer Marie Lightfoot (*Bum Steer, I.O.U.*) discovers that the clues of this particular crime point elsewhere. When the accused escapes and has Lightfoot on his mind, she must watch her back and re-check her facts lest she become just another name in a long list of victims. (Pocket Books)

Pub. Price: $22.95

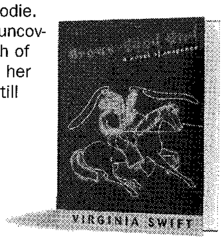
Discount **20%**

Our Price: $18.36

BROWN-EYED GIRL

by Virginia Swift

Professor Sally Adler, formerly singer Mustang Sally, returns to her stomping ground of Laramie, WY, to compile a bio of the late and much-esteemed local Meg Dunwoodie. As she researches the facts on Meg, she uncovers a past filled with secrets—and a wealth of diamonds. On top of it all, her ex re-enters her life and she quickly finds that old flames still burn hot. (HarperCollins)



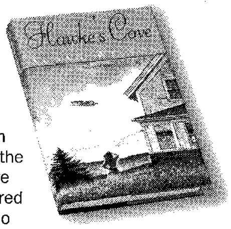
Pub. Price: $24.00

Discount **20%**

Our Price: $19.20

HAWKE'S COVE

by Susan Wilson



A long buried past surfaces when a WWII fighter plane lost for fifty years is pulled from the bottom of Hawke's Cove. The history of the plane is connected to that of a forbidden love between a woman whose husband disappeared overseas during the war and the stranger who entered her life soon after—and who was forced to exit when her husband reappeared. (Pocket Books)

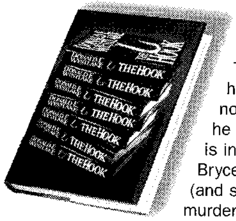
Pub. Price: $23.95

Discount **20%**

Our Price: $19.16

THE HOOK

by Donald E. Westlake



The bestselling author of *The Ax* is back with a harrowing tale of psychological suspense. Two novelists—Bryce, a rising star with a deadline he can't meet, and Wayne, a writer whose career is in a tailspin—strike a mutually beneficial deal. Bryce will publish Wayne's novel under his name (and split the advance) and, in return, Wayne will murder Bryce's greedy ex-wife. (Mysterious Press)

Pub. Price: $23.95

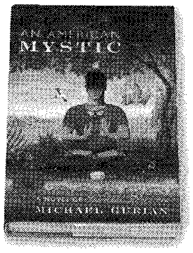
Discount **20%**

Our Price: $19.16

AN AMERICAN MYSTIC

by Michael Gurian

An American expatriate's spiritual quest takes him to Istanbul in search of an awakening where he finds adventure in the form of a divine figure dubbed "the Magician." But is this figure a figment of imagination or a guide to a higher plane? The bestselling author of *The Good Son* traverses ethereal terrain in an enlightening novel on the secrets of the soul. (Viking Arkana)



Pub. Price: $24.95

Discount **20%**

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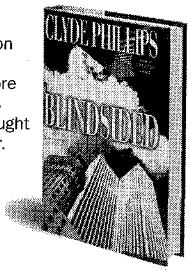
BLINDSIDED

by Clyde Phillips

Homicide inspector Jane Candiotti (last seen in the gripping bestseller *Fall from Grace*) is on the grisly trail of a cop killer who claims his victims' eyes as keepsakes. As more and more of her friends turn up dead, Candiotti realizes that the killings are intertwined and she's caught in the loop...with the killer's sights set on her. (Morrow)



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MOVIES OPENING

ALL I WANNA DO
A new student at an all-girls school (Gaby Hoffmann) leads a rebellion against co-education. Opening March 24. (Union Square.)

BUDDY BOY
A comedy about voyeurism, in which a photo-lab technician spies on a girl in a nearby apartment building. Written and directed by Mark Hanlon. Opening March 24. (The Screening Room.)

ROMEO MUST DIE
Shakespeare, kung-fu style. Jet Li and Aaliyah play the star-crossed lovers. Directed by Andrzej Bartkowiak. Opening March 22.

SUCH A LONG JOURNEY
On the eve of India's 1971 war with Pakistan, a family man gets drawn into an act of political sabotage. Directed by Sturla Gunnarsson. Opening March 24. (State.)

WAKING THE DEAD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 24. (Lincoln Square, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

WHATEVER IT TAKES
An adaptation of "Cyrano De Bergerac" set in a suburban high school. Opening March 24.

X
A group of teen-agers discover their predestined roles as defenders of civilization in this *anime* film directed by Rintaro. In Japanese. Opening March 24. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.

AMERICAN BEAUTY
This amazing and impassioned fantasia about American loneliness begins as satire and ends with a vision of the sublime. The defeated suburban patriarch Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey), condemned by his withdrawn daughter (Thora Birch) and his hyperorganized wife (Annette Bening), drops out of his job and misbehaves badly. After Lester's marriage gets blown apart by squalls of comic contempt, the movie, which was written by Alan Ball and directed by the British theatre maestro Sam Mendes (it's his first film), opens up and takes in Lester's suburban territory—the dissatisfactions of the business-mad nineties, in which the gospel of selfishness leaves people clenched and isolated. The bitter satirical riffs slowly give way to a mystical appreciation of the vagrant beauty trapped beneath the surface of life. The hard-edged, almost hyperreal cinematography, by Conrad L. Hall, and the editing, by Tariq Anwar and Chris Greenbury, shift back and forth between dream and actuality with mesmerizing beauty. With Mena Suvari as a teen vamp who is terrified of being ordinary, and Wes Bentley as a young drug dealer who uses his video camera to discover the hidden connections among things.—*David Denby* (9/20/99) (Beekman, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, State, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

BEYOND THE MAT
Pro wrestling, America's new national pastime, gets a good thrashing in this documentary by Barry Blaustein. His voice-over narration is pitifully cliché-ridden, but what he captures on camera and records in interviews is a bloody eye-opener. The film follows a trio of wrestlers—Terry Funk, a well-respected thirty-year veteran, Jack (Jake the Snake) Roberts, a journeyman in rapid decline, and Mick (Mankind) Foley, a sweet-natured superstar with a loving family—through a tour of arenas and barns across the country. The candid portraits of events both inside the ring (the brutal, Thunderdome-like fight matches) and outside (the fearful, emotionally volatile family lives) call into question the generally accepted belief that wrestling is pure theatre. What emerges is profiles of men whose lives are wracked with pain (there's more stitching done here than at a Levi's factory) and an uncomfortable feeling that some of them have become crowd-pleasing junkies, hooked on the need to draw blood, even if it's their own.—*Bruce Diones* (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, and Union Square.)

BOILER ROOM
A sensationally entertaining melodrama about young outer-borough louts in Canali suits who sell stocks of dubious value from a fly-by-night brokerage firm. Like "Wall Street" before it, this movie—written and directed by the twenty-seven-year-old Ben Younger—might be described as an ambivalent love letter to the outrageous hustle and greed of the great American bull market. Younger wants us to enjoy the young men's gleeful exhibitionism and powers of persuasion. At the same time, he depicts the brokers' triumphs as a low-life rampage. Amused, clear-sighted, and objective, "Boiler Room" has been made without false piety or hypocrisy. It stars Giovanni Ribisi as a young man lured into the brokerage house, and Ron Rifkin, in a brilliant performance, as his disapproving, federal-judge father. Among the young actors who play brokers, Ben Affleck, Vin Diesel, and Nicky Katt stand out.—*D.D.* (3/13/00) (Chelsea West, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE CIDER HOUSE RULES
The director Lasse Hallström has come to specialize in grownup movies about kids and teen-agers, especially of the luckless variety. This new picture, adapted by John Irving from his own novel, teems with scores of the little beggars; the tale begins at a snowbound orphanage in Maine, where Dr. Larch (Michael Caine) tends to the bodies and souls of the unwanted, even extending his skills to an illegal abortion practice. His protégé is Homer Wells (Tobey Maguire), who is set to follow in Larch's footsteps until those of Candy (Charlize Theron) appear. Homer departs for the wide world, where he learns about apples and sex, in that order. As an older and wiser man he returns to his destiny, although the getting of that wisdom has been oddly unengaging. The orphan scenes have an imaginative solidity that fades as the film proceeds, and you can't work out whether the gruelling social issues, like incest and abortion, are the subject of the movie or simply ballast. As apple movies go, this one lacks a core.—*Anthony Lane* (12/13/99) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE
Perversity is a thing with feathers—and sometimes with gills, pellets of dough, or rolling pins—in Jan Svankmajer's prankish, alarmingly funny 1996 film about the elaborate sexual rituals and fetishes of a half-dozen Czechs, who range from a smut dealer to a television anchorwoman. To describe their routines in detail is to give away the jokes. Step by step (or pinch by pinch), the entire film offers a dialogue-free chronicle of their bizarre erotic hobbies, which are equal parts Rube Goldberg and Masters and Johnson. Svankmajer's camera moves among them like an objective, invisible eavesdropper, until, in multiple climaxes, it becomes a participant in their fantasies. Svankmajer himself—with his carefully choreographed, yet always off-kilter combination of stop-motion animation and live action—becomes here the Jacques Tati of titillation.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 27.)

ERIN BROCKOVICH
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI
Part satire, part comic book, Jim Jarmusch's new film is set in a future that's one beat beyond the present and takes place in a generic cityscape called the Industrialized State. Forest Whitaker stars as a hulking, dangerous, yet curiously gentle samurai known as Ghost Dog. He follows the austere precepts of the samurai code but is also partial to gangsta rap and high-tech weaponry. His master is an Italian mob underling who serves a family in hilarious decline: they operate out of the back of a Chinese restaurant and cannot make the rent on their social club. Jarmusch keeps the camera moving slowly, attending to details, and the rap soundtrack by RZA (of Wu-Tang Clan fame) gives the whole undertaking a fuguelike quality. When the movie becomes a showdown between two ancient codes—the samurai and *omertà*—Jarmusch playfully aligns the pretend violence of cartoons with the stylized violence of Hollywood, leading to an enigmatic ending that is thoroughly unnerving. It's like an elaborate joke without a punch line. The setup, though, is worth it, thanks to Whitaker's quiet, powerful performance; in Jarmusch's hands he becomes a beacon of purity in a collapsing world.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 42nd Street E Walk.)

MISSION TO MARS
The last two Martian sorties, courtesy of NASA, have been embarrassing failures, and so is Brian De Palma's first leap into outer space. The film involves two missions: one, led by Luke Graham (Don Cheadle), runs into trouble with an angry sandstorm, whereupon another crew—played by Tim Robbins, Connie Nielsen, Gary Sinise, and Jerry O'Connell—is dispatched to sort out the mess. What promised to be a semi-respectable missing-in-action flick suddenly turns into a hallucinogenic exploration of our earthly, mortal existence, and poor Gary Sinise, who did such sterling work in bringing his imperilled colleagues back to Earth in "Apollo 13," is now obliged to take permanent leave of his senses. The movie is weakly written, sluggishly paced, and performed without gusto; it also happens to be beautifully shot, but the elegance of the camera movements is the only evidence that there used to be intelligent life in Brian De Palma films.—*A.L.* (3/20/00) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and Olympia I and II.)

THE NINTH GATE
Roman Polanski's sinister addiction to all things devilish continues unabated. This time, he casts Johnny Depp as a New York dealer in rare books, who is hired by a wealthy collector (Frank Langella) to track down the missing copy of a notorious text. Some of the illustrations were apparently drawn by Lucifer himself; one can see how this might increase the market value. The quest takes Depp to Europe, where the mildewed paraphernalia of creaking doors, leather bindings, and candlelit rituals seems marginally less absurd. Other characters flit like bats through the action; Lena Olin is a tattooed widow, while Emmanuelle Seigner is a green-eyed angel who floats down

Parisian steps almost as sweetly as Fred Astaire in "Funny Face." The early scenes of the picture are crisp and disturbing, but, as with "Bitter Moon," Polanski's spritely sense of humor seems to flicker and fade, and you get the awful feeling that he believes in the meaningless apocalypse of his finale. Evil deserves better than this.—*A.L.* (3/20/00) (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

NOT ONE LESS

In a rural Chinese village, a thirteen-year-old student (Wei Minzhi) becomes an emergency substitute teacher. When one of her charges, a ten-year-old boy, leaves to find work in a vast, nameless city nearby, she abandons her post, and sets out to find him. The great Chinese director Zhang Yimou shot this film in a style that might be called austere fabulism. He uses documentary techniques—casting nonactors and presenting the raw concrete walls and dirt roads in all their authentic ugliness. Yet the story is shaped like a fable from the silent-film days, and one gets caught up in it. It becomes a slow-motion chase movie, and the persistence of the young teacher gives the film a tone of hilarious monomania. Intentionally or not (it's hard for an outsider to tell), Zhang reveals the meanness and impersonality of contemporary Chinese society.—*D.D.* (2/21-28/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ORPHANS

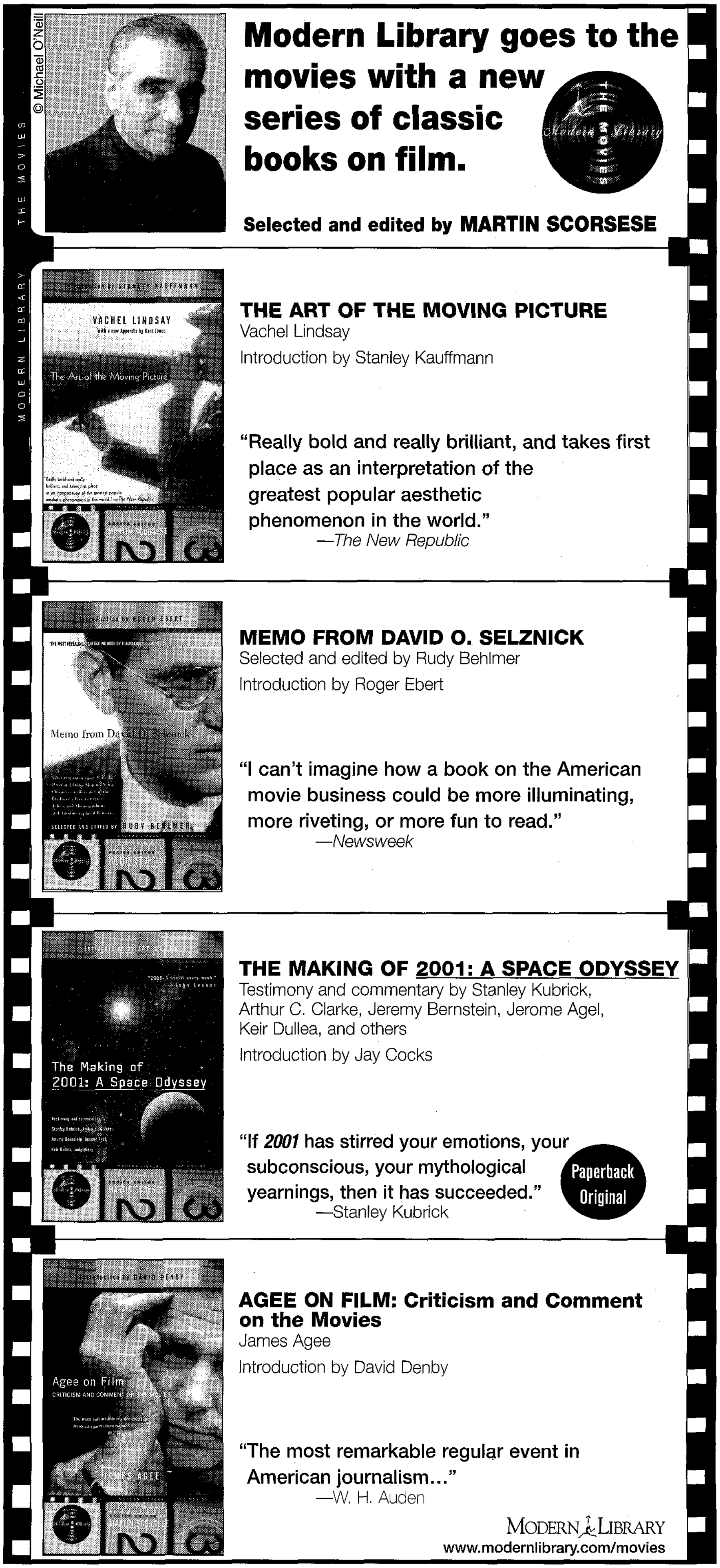
Peter Mullan's début feature is about a Glaswegian family under siege. The mother has just died, and her three sons (Gary Lewis, Douglas Henshall, and Stephen McCole), together with their disabled sister (Rosemarie Stevenson), are preparing to bury her; the film follows the four of them through the stormy eve of the funeral. A merry time is had by all: one brother gets stabbed, another is hellbent on murder, and the third witnesses—and, to some extent, causes—the devastation of a church. All of this makes the movie sound violently unpalatable, but there is something vigorous, even uplifting, in its aggressive wit and its determined lack of indulgence. In the end, the tale emerges as a credible study of grief—of the way that it flings hearts and minds, not to mention tongues, into a profane and maddening spin. Don't bother with the lily-livered subtitles; just listen carefully, and you'll soon get into the swing of Mullan's funny filth.—*A.L.* (3/20/00) (State.)

SOMETHING WILD

Jonathan Demme's 1986 romantic screwball comedy isn't just about a carefree kook (Melanie Griffith) and a pompous man from Wall Street (Jeff Daniels). It's a young man's fantasy of shucking off middle-class behavior patterns; it's about getting high on anarchic, larcenous behavior and then being confronted with ruthless, sadistic criminality. Demme weaves the stylization of rock videos into the fabric of the film. Starting with David Byrne and Celia Cruz singing Byrne's "Loco de Amor" during the opening credits, and ending with a reprise of "Wild Thing" by the reggae singer Sister Carol East, there are almost fifty songs (or parts of songs), several of them performed on screen by the Feelies. The score was put together by John Cale and Laurie Anderson, and it gives the movie a buzzing vitality. This is a party movie with both a dark and a light side.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; March 23.)

SPECTRES OF THE SPECTRUM

Watching Craig Baldwin's new film, an eighty-four-minute diatribe against the standardization of the electromagnetic spectrum, is like flying into a pop-culture black hole: time and space are bent, reality is distorted, and you are crushed mercilessly by its referential excess. Baldwin has taken the detritus of the last fifty years of visual culture—kinetoscopes, instructional videos, B-movie clips, filmstrips, newscasts—and produced a paranoid fable about how the democratic promise of electricity has been co-opted by media conglomerates who use the "spectrum" to flatten the minds of the masses. A father and daughter, "media pirates" who live in an Airstream trailer located in the Nevada desert, serve as our heroes. Booboo, the daughter, discovers that the secret to saving the Earth from media enslavement might be encoded in an old broadcast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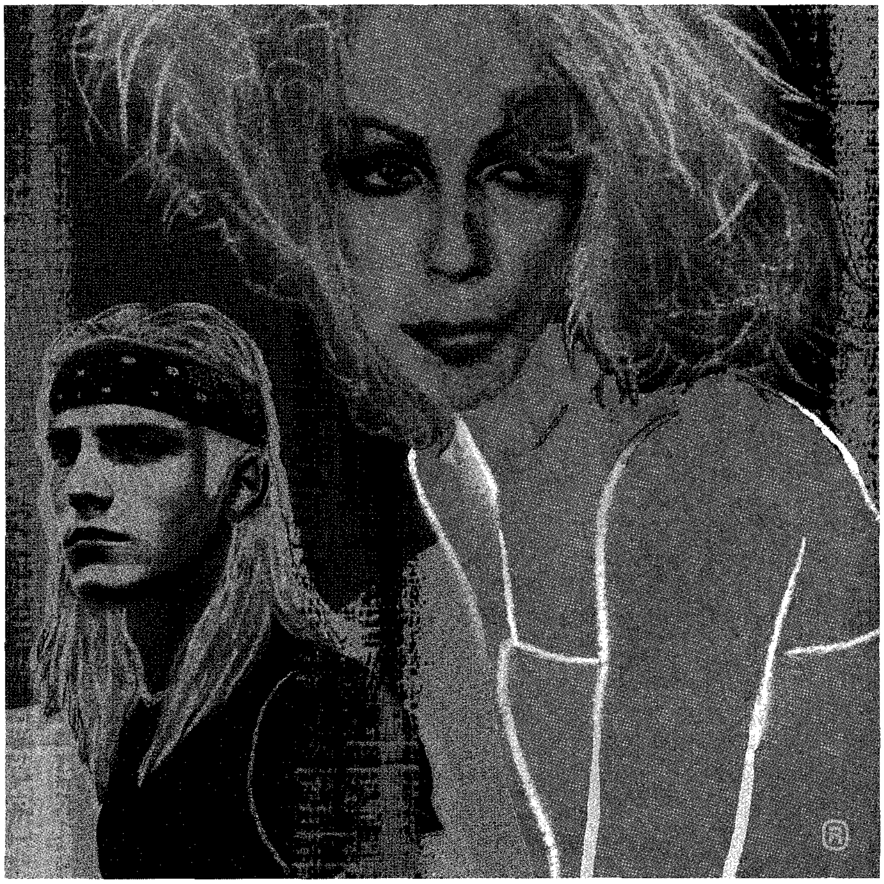
of "Science in Action," a fifties TV show on which her grandmother appeared. She heads into outer space to surf the spectrum, where she encounters a fusillade of images that impart a quasi-history of radio, television, mesmerism, RCA, sunspots, the Edison labs—a sort of manic crib sheet of technological history. It will also be screened as part of the Whitney Museum's 2000 Biennial Exhibition.—*M.A.* (Cinema Village.)

TOPSY-TURVY
Mike Leigh's brilliant re-creation of the most famous partnership in the British theatre—the collaboration of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan in the glory era of imperial rule. There are elements here of a traditional bio-pic—failure, triumph, intimations of immortality—but none of the stodginess and self-congratulation that usually plague the form. Sullivan (Allan Corduner), a libertine who nevertheless had serious pretensions as a composer, and Gilbert (Jim Broadbent), formal, irascible, and asexual, but a great theatrical pro, are so dissimilar in temperament that they can hardly bear each other's company. Leigh suggests that the combination of sentimental languor and incisiveness produced the art of "The Mikado," whose preparation and first performance take up the second half of the movie. The authentic period stage lighting produces a glow on the painted faces; the fragile beauty of Sullivan's tunes is piercing when they are played, as they are here, at slower tempos than we are used to hearing. In all, one of the greatest movies about the theatre. With Lesley Manville, Timothy Spall, Ron Cook, and Wendy Nottingham.—*D.D.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

WHAT PLANET ARE YOU FROM?
Garry Shandling plays a humanoid sent to Earth from an all-male planet. His task: to impregnate an earthling and thereby set off a population war against us. His equipment: a motor-driven vibrating penis that buzzes and buzzes and won't give up. Shandling has big soft lips, a red face, and a squelched, outrageously bland manner that allows him to deliver startlingly acid lines (mostly to the female characters) as if they were entirely reasonable. His humanoid touches down in Phoenix and meets up with a quivering ex-alcoholic plagued by low self-esteem—Annette Bening at her most soulful. These two are perfectly pleasant together, but they are trapped in an idea that doesn't expand into much of anything. Directed by Mike Nichols, "What Planet Are You From?" plays like a ten-minute TV skit that has been teased out to full length and treated as though it were the perfect material for a brilliant comedy of manners. It isn't.—*D.D.* (3/13/00) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, State, and Union Square.)

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS
Matthew Perry, who is sometimes the only thing that keeps "Friends" on its toes, attempts yet another leap to the big screen. He plays a Montreal dentist whose next-door neighbor (Bruce Willis) turns out to be a hit man hiding from the Mob. Throw in a deep-voiced heavy (Michael Clarke Duncan) and a couple of fiercely disappointed wives (Rosanna Arquette and Natasha Henstridge), and soon everyone wants to kill somebody else. Perry and Willis—the scared and the smooth—are not a bad pairing, and Perry gets the chance for some jerky slapstick (he bounces off Clarke Duncan as if off a vast rubber wall), but the film is too hectic and scattershot to give the actors much room. Visually, this may be the dingiest film of the year so far, although Amanda Peet, in her role as a death-crazed dental assistant, cheers things up considerably. The director is Jonathan Lynn, who doesn't quite have the courage to carry off this black comedy; the mood of loving contentment which triumphs at the end feels like an insult.—*A.L.* (3/6/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

WONDER BOYS
A pleasant dud from director Curtis Hanson and screenwriter Steve Kloves. Michael Douglas plays Grady Tripp, pothead campus novelist and hero to undergraduates, who cannot finish his new book and gets drawn into all kinds of social complications. Douglas gives a surprisingly mild and rueful performance, but the movie has very little dramatic interest and quickly slides into whimsy. The vibrant Frances McDormand is the university's chancellor, with whom Tripp is having an affair; Tobey Maguire is a maddeningly elusive writing student who may or may not have talent; and Robert Downey, Jr., drifting through a fey, meaningless performance, is a visiting New York book editor. "Wonder Boys" isn't sloppy; it's been made with love, but one looks at it in bewilderment, amazed that so much care has been taken with desultory material that seems all wrong for the movies. Adapted from Michael Chabon's novel.—*D.D.* (2/21-28/00) (Coronet Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)



LOUCHE LIFE *Thirty years ago, before the gender-bending seventies really got going, Paul Morrissey's "Trash," a low-budget, low-camp slice of East Village life delighted the more intrepid moviegoers with its wry sendup of old-fashioned Hollywood romance. In their wonderfully witless way, Joe Dellasandro, the heroin-sodden, incurably impotent beefcake, and Holly Woodlawn, the incurably needy transvestite, are as stuck on each other as Gable and Leigh, and as funny as Tracy and Hepburn. This week, "Trash" reappears, in all its tawdry glory, at the Quad Cinema.*

JOHN RITTER

ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (1/22/99)
Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE
Quad Cinema.

BOYS DON'T CRY (12/20/99)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.

FINAL DESTINATION
Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly.

THE HURRICANE (1/10/00)
Criterion Center and Union Square.

THE INSIDER (11/8/99)
Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.

THE NEXT BEST THING
42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.

REAR WINDOW
The Screening Room.

THE SIXTH SENSE (8/23-30/99)
Criterion Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.

SWEET AND LOWDOWN (12/6/99)
First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and Union Square.

WINTER SLEEPERS
Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave.,
Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.

Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The films of French director Claire Denis. All films are in French, with English subtitles. March 25 at 2: "Nénette and Boni" (1997). ♦ March 25 at 4: "U.S. Go Home" (1994) and "Nice, Very Nice" (1995). ♦ March 26 at 2: Claire Denis will introduce her newest film, "Good Work" (1999), a French colonial story inspired by Melville's "Billy Budd." ♦ March 26 at 4:30: "Man No Run" (1989).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through March 26: "The Havana Film Festival in New York," a program of features, shorts, and animations representing forty-one years of Cuban cinema.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—March 22 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Thin Blue Line" (1988, Errol Morris). ♦ March 23-24 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Mauvais Sang" (1986, Leos Carax; in French). ♦ Two films about Klaus Kinski. March 25-26 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "My Best Friend" (1999, Werner Herzog) and "Please Kill Mr. Kinski" (1999, David Schmoeller). ♦ March 27 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Conspirators of Pleasure" (†). ♦ March 28 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Gloria" (1980, John Cassavetes).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 6: The "Neo-Noir" festival. March 22-23: "Bad Lieutenant" (1992, Abel Ferrara) and "King of New York" (1990, Ferrara). ♦

MARCELLUS HALL

Opening March 22, Jet Li in "Romeo Must Die."

March 24-25: "Fireworks" (1998, Takeshi Kitano) and "Sonatine" (1994, Kitano). ♦ March 26: "Body Heat" (1981, Lawrence Kasdan) and "Something Wild" (†). ♦ March 27: "Seven" (1995, David Fincher) and "Blow Out" (1981, Brian De Palma). ♦ March 28: "Romeo Is Bleeding" (1993, Peter Medak) and "Shallow Grave" (1994, Danny Boyle).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—March 21 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Orphée" (1950, Jean Cocteau; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The "New Directors/New Films" festival. March 24 at 6 and March 25 at noon: "A Pornographic Affair" (1999, Frédéric Fonteyne; in French). ♦ March 24 at 9 and March 25 at 10:30: "Adrenaline Drive" (1999, Shinobu Yaguchi; in Japanese). ♦ March 25 at 3 and March 26 at 5:30: "Hidden River" (1999, Mercedes García Guevara; in Spanish). ♦ March 25 at 5 and March 26 at 2:30: "Idle Running" (1999, Janez Burger; in Slovene). ♦ March 25 at 8 and March 26 at noon: "Suzhou River" (1999, Lou Ye; in Mandarin). ♦ March 27 at 6 and March 28 at 9: "Nowhere to Hide" (1999, Lee Myung-Se; in Korean). ♦ March 27 at 9 and March 28 at 6: "Voyages" (1999, Emmanuel Finkiel; in French and Yiddish).

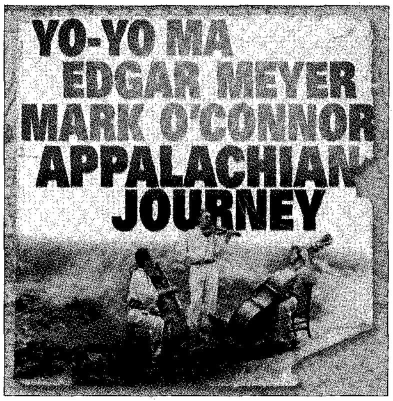
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St., at Ave. A. (254-3300)—March 22-28: "The Lifestyle," a documentary by David Schisgall about swinging couples.

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway (864-1414)—March 27 at 6: A screening of "The Cummington Story," "The City," and "The North Star," featuring the film scores of Aaron Copland. ♦ Through April 25: A retrospective of the films of John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar. March 28 at 7: "The Flower of My Secret" (1994, Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ March 28 at 9:15: "High Heels" (1991, Almodóvar; in Spanish).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—March 22-April 6: "Fragments * Jerusalem," a film by Ron Havilio documenting two hundred years of his family's history in Jerusalem. Shown in two sessions. March 22 at 1 and 8, March 23 at 4:45, March 24 at 8, March 25-26 at 4:30, and March 28 at 4:30: Parts 1-3. ♦ March 22 at 4:15, March 23 at 1 and 8, March 24 at 1, March 25-26 at 7:45, and March 28 at 1: Parts 4-7.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The films and videos selected for the 2000 Biennial Exhibition will be screened daily starting March 23.

AN AMERICAN MUSICAL JOURNEY CONTINUES.



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vicky: the arts is not the most stable career. then, when you have a child, the uncertainty really hits home.

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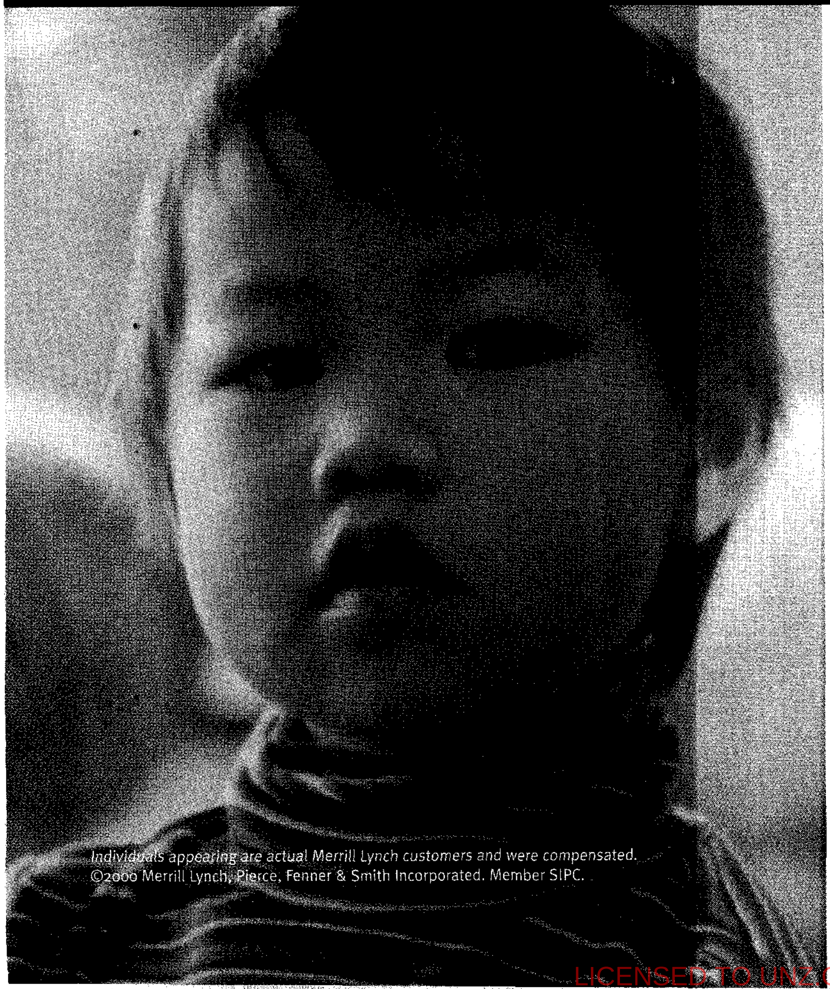
we couldn't be doing this if we thought we were compromising amanda's future.

ml.com
RINGER HALL

"amanda's needs are not negotiable"



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leila ross/financial consultant

leila: vicky's instincts were to put their assets in a nice safe place...t-bills and cds.

we took a hard look at what they really needed—immediate and long term—and put together a plan. eventually, we created a portfolio designed not only for growth but also for a steady income so vicky could devote herself full-time to her singing.

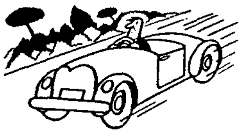
then amanda came along, which gave a whole new meaning to "long-term investing."

be bullish **Merrill Lynch**

THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



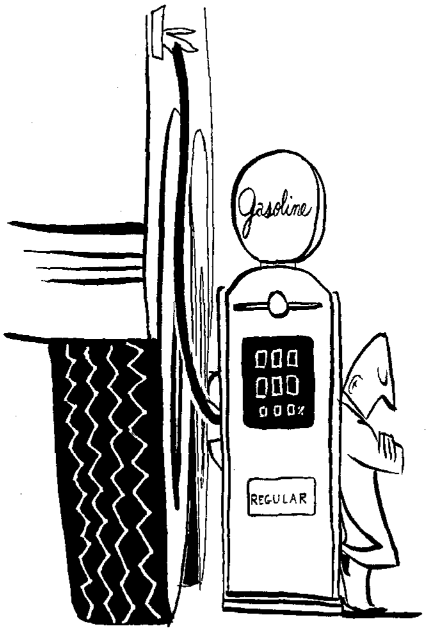
Two weeks after Jimmy Carter took office, he delivered his first "fireside chat." In the wake of the Arab oil embargo, fuel prices were still rising, and in the midst of an unusually cold winter the nation was facing a shortage of natural gas. For the chat, Carter, always a great believer in the symbolism of public-spiritedness, wore a cardigan, and sat in the White House library, where the thermostat had been turned down to sixty-five degrees.

"We will ask private companies to sacrifice, just as private citizens must do," he told the nation. "We can meet this energy challenge if the burden is borne fairly among all our people." Carter's remarks were well received, by both the public and the press, but, after travelling around the country and presenting his energy bill to Congress, the President confessed that he was discouraged. He told his diary, "It was like pulling teeth to convince the people of America that we had a serious problem."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

As gasoline prices continued to climb last week, and politicians rushed to allay the public's anxiety, there were many invocations of the seventies, but not a sweater to be seen. George W. Bush called for increasing oil production by opening the Arctic wildlife refuge to drilling. Congressional Republicans insisted that federal gasoline taxes be cut, and Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, of New York, called for supplies to be released from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is intended for use in a national emergency. As truckers honked their way around Washington, President Clinton agreed that something had to be done to bring prices down.

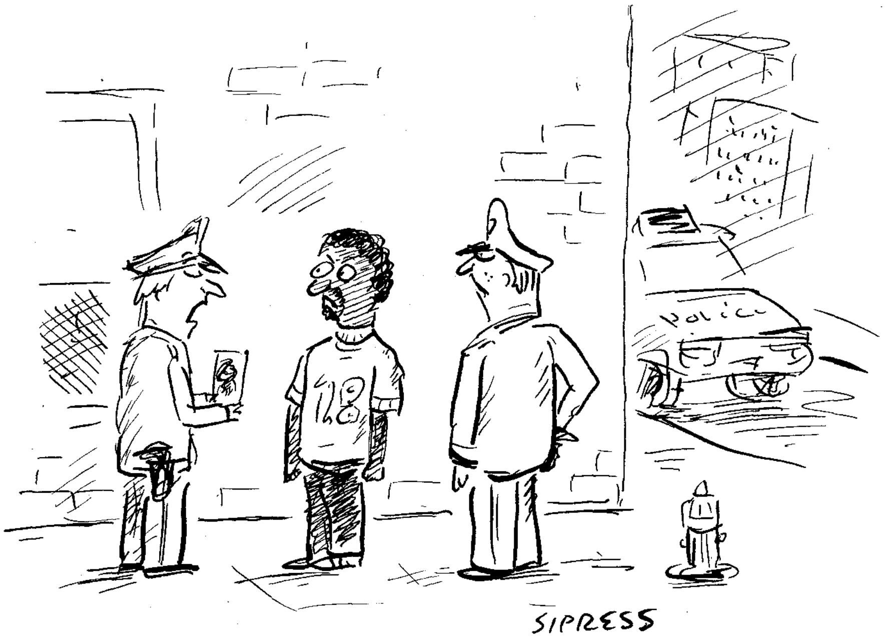
Much has been made of the pettiness of public life in this country, of the increasing self-involvement of voters and the readiness of politicians to exploit it. Nevertheless, last week's events were peculiarly depressing.



Almost no one by now is unaware of the basic facts of the situation. America, with five per cent of the world's population, consumes twenty-five per cent of its oil. Gas in this country, far from being punishingly expensive, is still cheap. In February of last year, the price in inflation-adjusted dollars reached its lowest level in seventy years, and even now, in real terms, a tank of gas still costs much less than it did two decades ago. In practically every other industrialized nation in the world, the prospect of paying two dollars a gallon would seem a terrific bargain.

The last oil crisis took place at a moment that seems, in retrospect, idealistic, one in which it was still conceivable to ask Americans to change the way they live. Over objections from the auto industry, Congress in 1975 passed aggressive fuel-efficiency standards for new vehicles. The speed limit was lowered to fifty-five miles per hour on the nation's highways, and tax credits and low-income assistance programs were created to encourage Americans to insulate their homes. Along with the higher price of fuel, these measures led to significant gains, so that by the mid-eighties the gas mileage of cars on the road was more than twenty-seven miles to the gallon, nearly twice what it had been a decade earlier.

As gas prices declined, so too did enthusiasm for almost any kind of conservation. To consume conspicuously nowadays in many parts of the country



"You look like this sketch of someone who's thinking about committing a crime."

• •

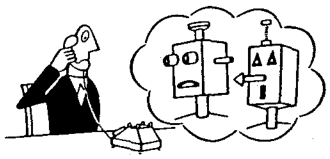
requires a car as big as a house and a house as big as a hangar. Congress has gone so far as to prohibit the Clinton Administration from even considering raising fuel-efficiency standards and, thanks to the craze for S.U.V.s, the average gas mileage of new American vehicles has actually declined, despite the development of new materials and technologies that make it possible to get sixty miles to the gallon.

All this has happened even as our understanding of what is at stake has become fuller and, consequently, far grimmer. In the seventies, global warming was a little-known hypothesis. Now, after a decade that included eight of the warmest years on record, it is more or less accepted as a fact.

In the recent clamor, one could have hoped that someone, maybe Al Gore, who wrote an entire book on the fate of the earth, would have risen to the occasion. But in the end it is not really fair to demand from politicians what we don't demand from ourselves. During the last energy crisis, public-opinion polling, like atmospheric prediction, was a less perfect science. Today, everyone in higher office knows what Jimmy Carter apparently did not, which is that calling for sacrifice is a loser's game.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

THE BENCH
THE CASE OF THE "CHEERS" REPLICANTS



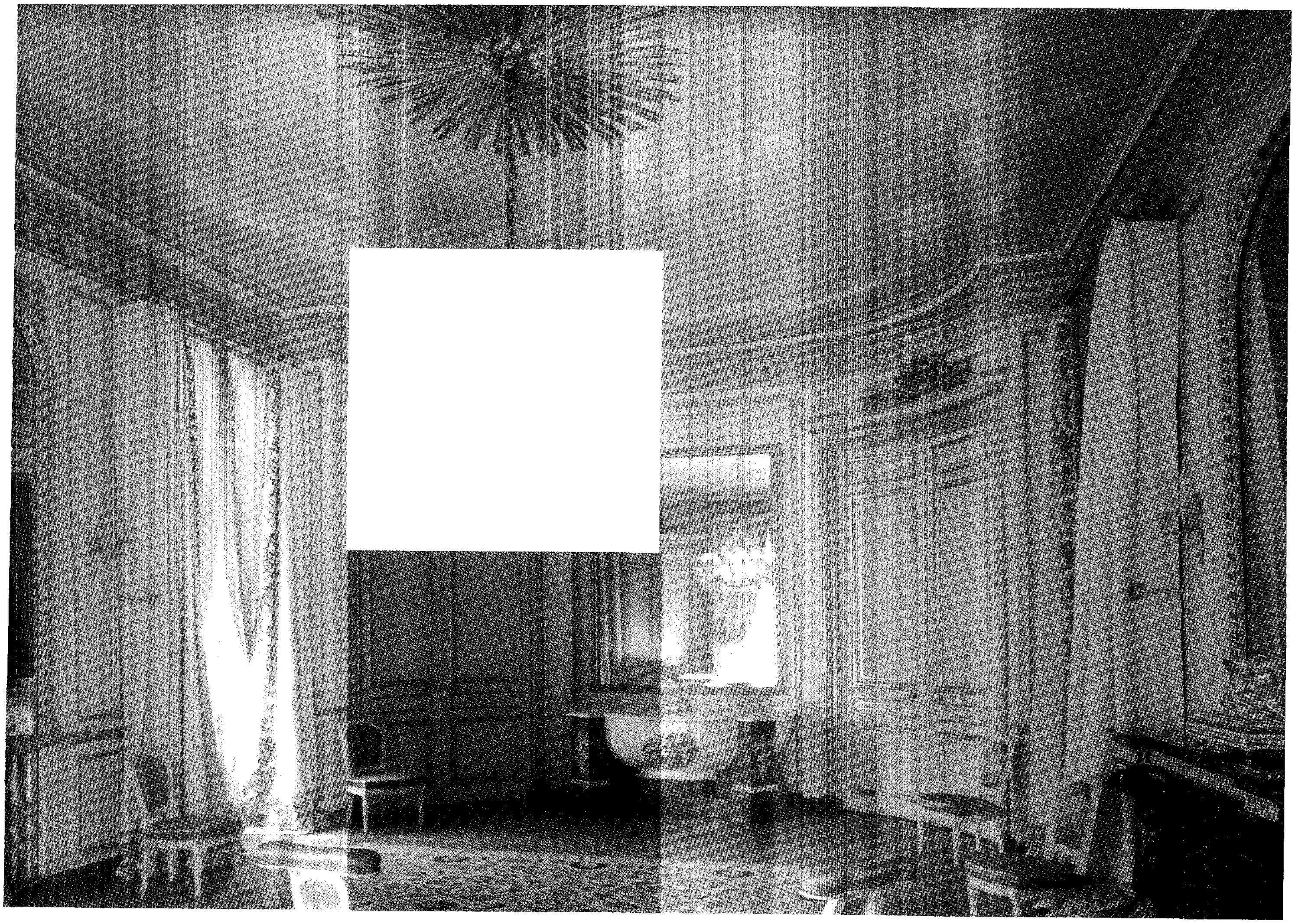
The concept of the home-field advantage is a familiar one in the sporting world, but it sometimes applies in the legal field as well. That's the subtext of a peculiar lawsuit that comes out of what one judge has called "the Court of Appeals for the Hollywood Circuit"—and which is heading to the Supreme Court later this month.

It's the case of the "Cheers" robots. In 1990, when the popular sitcom was still on NBC, the show's producer, Paramount, licensed to the Marriott subsidiary Host International the right to set up airport bars using the "Cheers" name and theme. At several of the bars, the décor included two animatronic "customers" that were, in the words of one court brief, "programmed to move and to speak to each other humorously whenever customers sit within a certain distance from them at the bar." The robots are named Bob and Hank, but they are based on Norm, the fat, malingering accountant, and Cliff, the imbecile mailman, who were characters on the show. George Wendt and John Ratzenberger, the actors who played the parts on "Cheers," brought the case against Host International.

The actors sued under a California law that protects the "right of publicity"—that forbids the use of a person's "name, voice . . . or likeness . . . for purposes of advertising or selling" without his consent. California celebrities have filed a number of such lawsuits in recent years. Vanna White, of "Wheel of Fortune," sued Samsung for using a letter-turning robot in one of its consumer-electronics ads. Dustin Hoffman sued *Los Angeles* magazine for using his image from "Tootsie" in a fashion spread. In Hollywood, the local celebrities have won these cases, sometimes for large sums of money. A federal court judge awarded Hoffman three million dollars, although that judgment remains on appeal. "You can just look at the Dustin Hoffman case—which only involved a single image—to see how much is at stake in our case," said Dale Kinsella, the lawyer for the "Cheers" actors.

A trial judge in Los Angeles has thrown out Wendt and Ratzenberger's case twice, but each time the federal court of appeals that includes California has reversed those judgments and ordered the case to proceed to trial. Paramount, which intervened on Host International's behalf, has argued, in effect, that starstruck Hollywood judges are unfairly limiting the ability of studios to exploit the lucrative market for sequels, licensing, and other ancillary tie-ins. What's more, as Judge Alex Kozinski pointed out in his dissenting opinion in the Vanna White case, the studios have a free-speech right to draw on popular culture, noting that Paul Simon didn't have to get Eastman Kodak's permission to sing "Kodachrome" and Prince didn't have to pay General Motors to invoke the "Little Red Corvette." To push this argument, Paramount has retained the noted New York First Amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams to make its case in the Supreme Court.

Still, the case does lack a certain frisson, because the robots are so, well, unfunny. "I just had 'all you can eat' jumbo shrimp at the coffee shop," the animatronic mailman quips. "Are you telling me I ate an oxymoron?" "No, Hank," the Bob robot replies. "I think in your case just 'moron' is enough." These days, the



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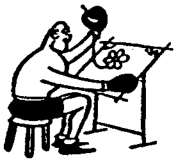
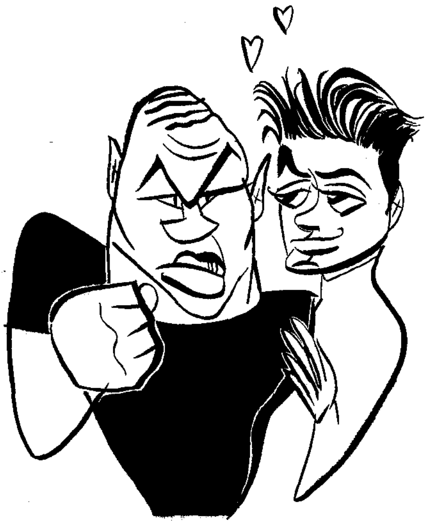
robots are doing their shtick in four airports—in Memphis, Las Vegas, Anchorage, and Vancouver, British Columbia. "They break all the time," one person involved in the case said. "And Host found that the bars did just as well without them. Now when they stop talking they just throw them away."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

THE PICTURES
JAMES TOBACK'S CINÉMA VÉRITÉ



Mike Tyson makes his acting début early next month, playing himself in "Black and White," James Toback's new movie, which is about rap artists and the white private-school teen-agers who love them. The Staten Island rappers the Wu Tang Clan star in the movie, and they also served as authenticity advisers to insure that Toback—who, although he wears baggy pants and a baseball cap, is fifty-five years old and white—kept it real. "Black and White," which is largely improvised, may be the only film in which the stars are actually taller in real life than they appear to be on the screen, given that they include Claudia Schiffer (five feet eleven) as an anthropology Ph.D. student, Brooke Shields (six feet) as a would-be bohemian documentary filmmaker, and Allan Houston (six feet six) as a rising basketball star. The movie shows a side of Tyson that we have seen before—he pounds and throttles a guy before hurling him to the ground—as well as a side we haven't: the guy in question is Robert Downey, Jr., playing a flamboyant homosexual who attempts to pick up every man he sees, including Mike Tyson.



Mike Tyson and Robert Downey, Jr.

The scene, Toback explained last week over an iced white mocha at Starbucks on Columbus Avenue, was originally conceived in bed in the Beverly Hills Hotel one night last year. "Downey was supposed to show up at midnight, and he showed up three hours late," said Toback, whose earlier films with Downey include "The Pick-Up Artist" and "Two Girls and a Guy." "I was half asleep when he arrived, and I was in bed, and he lay down next to me. He said, 'Why don't I play Brooke's husband?' I said, 'She doesn't have a husband.' He said, 'Why don't I be her gay husband? Why don't I be her really gay husband, who hits on every guy he meets?' I said, 'O.K.—in fact, why don't you hit on Mike Tyson?' He cracked up."

When it came time to shoot the scene, which takes place one evening in the rappers' loft, Toback told Tyson that Downey would approach him, but didn't tell him that it would be a sexual approach. "Downey asked, 'What if he kills me?' " Toback recalled. "I said, 'Think of it this way: If he kills you, what better way is there to die than on camera in this movie? It's like Achilles—you can die an exciting young death or a boring old one.' By now he was choking with laughter." Soon, however, Downey was choking for real: in the scene, Tyson, after trying to fend him off with words, resorted to more familiar defenses, slapping him in the face and then wringing his neck and throwing him to the ground as if he were a wet rag. Toback said, "I talked to Robert about it later, and he said that a stage smack from Mike is like a shovel slam from any other actor. In Mike's physical lexicon, Mike was slapping him with the intention of not hurting him too much. Robert said that he vibrated right down to his feet." Having dispensed with Downey, Tyson then found himself at the mercy of Brooke Shields, who, to his dismay, started improvising a pass at him herself. "They say I raped a woman," the clearly distraught Tyson says onscreen. "They put me in the penitentiary. I don't need no white bitch coming on to me."

Toback first made Tyson's acquaintance in 1986, on the set of "The Pick-Up Artist," during an all-night conversation that included Downey, Warren Beatty, and Gary Hart. That evening now sounds as if it, too, were a crazy improvisational session, one with even more fantastical outcomes than Toback has conjured in "Black and White." "Tyson wasn't yet the champion; he was being groomed to be the champion," Toback recalled. "Gary Hart, who was about to become the Democratic front-runner, was angling to use Tyson to get the black vote. Imagine—Gary Hart as President, and Mike Tyson as his liaison to the black community. This shows you how much has happened in the past fourteen years."

—*Rebecca Mead*

THE CAMPAIGN
HALEY BARBOUR UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Early last year, Governor George W. Bush of Texas gathered ten people together in Austin and announced that they would serve as his official Presidential Exploratory Committee. The group included congressmen, a senator, a governor, and even a former Secretary of State, George Shultz. Among the titled officials, "there was only one ordinary 'mister,' " Haley Barbour recalled the other day. "Me."

Barbour, a Washington lobbyist who served as the chairman of the Republican National Committee from 1993 to 1997, had been assiduously courted by Bush (whom Barbour calls Junior, even though they're the same age and even though W. is one H. short of being a real junior). Barbour, who was born into a prominent family in Yazoo City, Mississippi, has a singsong drawl and a shambling gait that can seem at odds with his reputation as one of the shrewder and better-connected operators in Washington. "He is the single best strategist in the Republican Party," Bob Beckel, a Democrat who is a friend of Barbour's, says. Mike Murphy, a Republican campaign consultant, once described Barbour as "a cross be-

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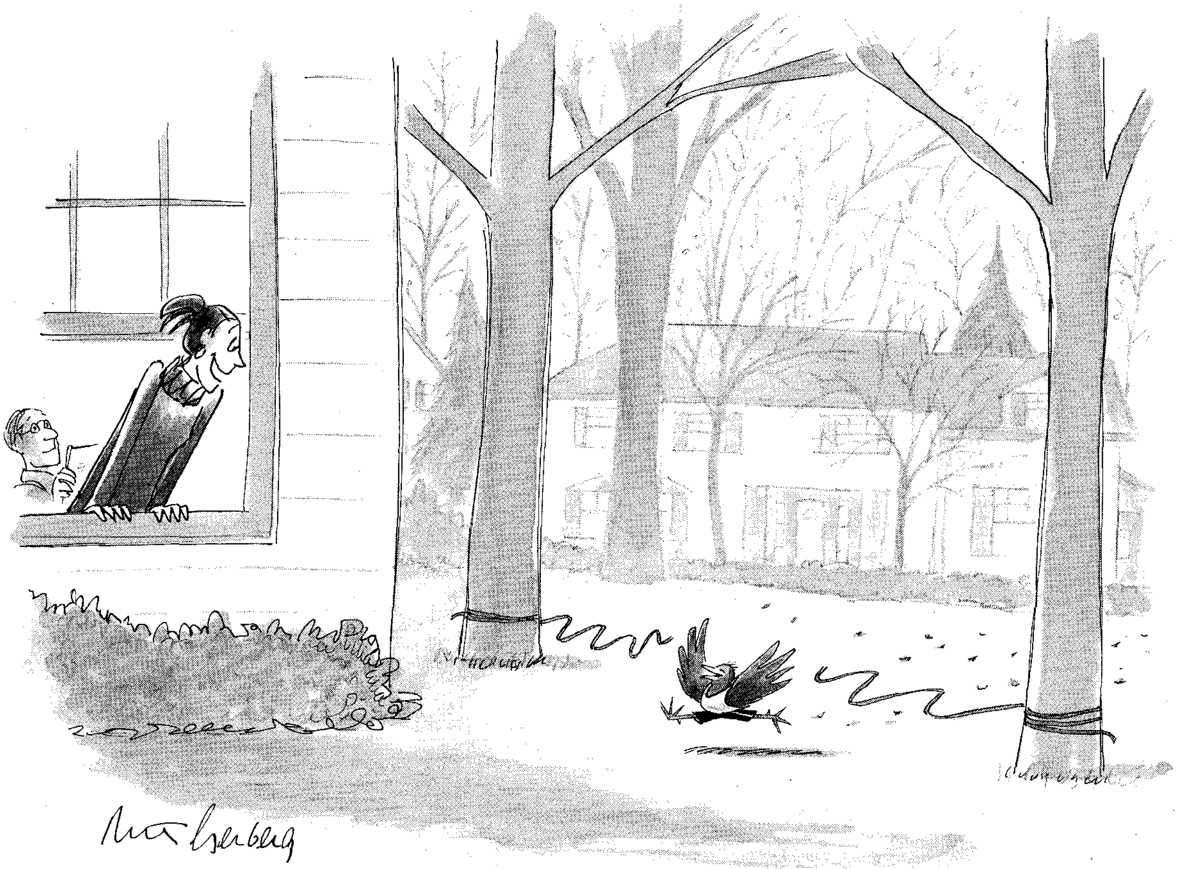
tween Huckleberry Finn and Rommel.”

Barbour has baggage, however, that could become a campaign liability. For the past month, Bush has been presenting himself as a reformer and as a cleaner campaign fund-raiser than Al Gore. “I’m the outsider,” he told the *Times* last week. “What’s critical to my election is . . . that people hear the call for reform.” Barbour is the consummate insider, and his history of exotic fund-raising adventures ill comports with Bush’s new emphasis. During the four years that he headed the Republican National Committee, Barbour broke all records for R.N.C. fund-raising, bankrolling the 1994 Republican coup in Congress. When he left the Party post, blue-chip corporations he had solicited for the R.N.C., such as Federal Express and the big tobacco companies, signed up with his lobbying firm, Barbour Griffith & Rogers, hoping to benefit from the good will Barbour had engendered in Congress. Last year, Barbour and his two partners sold the firm for twenty-one million dollars, but he continues to lobby, and, according to an analysis by the Center for Responsive Politics, combined donations to Bush from individuals and PACs connected to Barbour’s clients have already exceeded two hundred and forty thousand dollars, and Barbour personally has raised more than a hundred thousand.

Bush has made Al Gore’s and the Democrats’ fondness for Chinese money a central theme of his spring offensive. He is surely aware that a federal grand jury spent two years investigating Barbour for his fund-raising activities. (Like the top Democratic campaign officials, Barbour was never charged with any crime.) The focus of the inquiry was a flood of money given to the R.N.C. in the weeks before the 1994 elections, which was parcelled out to local and state congressional races. Senate investigators concluded that Barbour had raised much of this money from Ambrous Tung Young, a Hong Kong businessman. Tung Young had loaned more than two million dollars to the National Policy Forum, a “think tank” set up by Barbour, and this money, the investigators alleged, was used as collateral against which the think tank borrowed a similar sum from an American bank, which was then transferred to the R.N.C. Democratic Senate investigators say that twenty-five thousand dollars of the money appears to have gone to Bush’s gubernatorial election campaign.

In Senate testimony, Barbour denied that the money went to Republican campaigns and that it came from a foreign source, which would have been illegal. But the Hong Kong businessman and two associates, one of whom was a former chairman of the Republican Party, testified that Barbour had requested the money specifically for the campaigns, and that he knew where the funds came from. “Haley’s big problem was whether he perjured himself in Congress,” a person familiar with the investigation says. Alan Baron, the minority chief counsel on the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, which deposed Barbour, says, “I’ve been told that a faction in the Justice Department fought vigorously for his prosecution, but that they didn’t pursue it because of political considerations. They felt they would have to have an offsetting case against a Democrat.” In other words, a ceasefire was politically more palatable.

Since leaving the R.N.C., Barbour



“Oh, Julius, look! It’s the first robin.”

has established himself as the chief liaison between Republican candidates and the Party's richest source of soft money, tobacco companies. The tobacco companies have a huge stake in the outcome of the Presidential race. In return for their generosity to the R.N.C., they surely expect some relief from Democratic policies that have been damaging to their stock prices and their public image. When, in 1998, the White House failed to reach a voluntary settlement with cigarette manufacturers, President Clinton instructed the Justice Department to file a civil lawsuit aimed at recouping an estimated twenty billion dollars that the federal government spends annually to treat smoking-related illnesses. Since the day Clinton threatened this suit, "tobacco stocks are down about sixty per cent," said Martin Feldman, a tobacco-company analyst for Salomon Smith Barney. Gore has backed the litigation. Bush's campaign spokesman has said that the governor "hopes the era of big government is not replaced by the era of big lawsuits," and the industry takes that to mean that he would let the lawsuit "wither away," Feldman said. Barbour is the man to make that happen, and he will cheerfully admit it.

"It's a game," Barbour told me, toting a golf bag on his way home from a Philip Morris corporate-sales retreat the other day. "Campaign-finance reform hasn't made the situation better; it's just given an advantage to people who know how to cheat legally." He added, "Some people think that private money in politics is bad. I don't. I don't worry about the corruption issue. I think it's just a canard."

—*Jane Mayer*

STENO DEPT.

MEET OSCAR'S TRANSCRIBER

If it weren't for closed captioning, all those Times Square tourists with their necks craned backward wouldn't be able to "hear" the "Today" show on the Panasonic Astrovision Screen every weekday morning. The show is taped at a studio in Rockefeller Plaza, but the captions are the work of Missy Macri, a kind of super stenographer who sits in a small ergonomically correct room some four hundred miles away, in southwestern Pennsylvania. Monday through Friday, Macri, who is thirty-two, drives from her home, in Moon Township, Pennsylvania, to an office park outside Pittsburgh. There, at the headquarters of VITAC Corporation (Vital Access Through Captioning), she begins her shift at four in the morning, captioning a business-news show. She does "Today" from seven to nine, has breakfast, and captions "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" at ten. She leaves work at noon, drives home, naps, and usually turns in at around nine-thirty. This Sunday night, she will have to stay up late (or get up early) to live-caption the Academy Awards broadcast.

Macri, an eight-year veteran at VITAC and a court reporter for four and a half years before that, is one of an élite group of "real-timers," specially trained captioners certified to perform real-time live broadcasts. Live captioning pays about the same as courtroom reporting, around sixty thousand dollars a year, but it is considered much more prestigious. Real-timers are required to transmit two hundred and twenty-five words per minute (most people speak approximately a hundred and eighty words per minute), with ninety-eight-per-cent accuracy.

Marty Block, a VITAC executive and the first person ever to perform live captioning (for the Academy Awards in 1982), says, "Missy is about the best captioner in the world. She's incredible. We worked with sledgehammers, and these kids today are working with pretty fine instruments."

For the first time this year, VITAC has grabbed the Oscar-captioning gig away from the National Captioning Institute, the industry pioneer, for whom Block used to work. Block helped N.C.I. develop the TomCAT Instatext software that makes live captioning possible. Closed captions, encoded electronically into vertical line 21 (of 525) of the television signal, are a computer-produced translation of the captioner's steno keystrokes. Like court reporters, real-timers don't type words. They transmit syllables, words, or sometimes whole phrases phonetically by pressing up to twenty keys simultaneously on a special, unmarked keyboard. It's like playing chords on a piano. To write the word "pop," a stenographer presses the left-hand "p," the "o" with the left thumb, and the right-hand "p," all at once. A word like "grudge" requires more keys than it has letters, because, on a steno machine, a hard "g" sound requires four keys ("tkpw"), as does a "j" sound ("tblg"). But all this is second nature to a real-timer.

A real-timer has to be aware of the subtleties of the computer's vocabulary, or else mistranslations will cause nonsensical errors. Block had some problems in 1982, when Meryl Streep won the best-actress Oscar for "Sophie's Choice," and "Holocaust" appeared onscreen as "holly cost." Macri's most memorable blooper happened on the "Today" show. "You know how Willard Scott will come on with some sort of public-service announcement? He was saying something about a fund to 'help burn victims,' and mine came out 'Hepburn victims,' " she said. For the past few weeks, Macri has been programming her machine with customized keystrokes for every movie title ("rl/rl" is "The Cider House Rules"; "sx/sx" is "The Sixth Sense").

Block remembers the difficulty of that first Oscar broadcast, in 1982. "Doing the acceptance speeches was horrendous," he said. "The best foreign film was 'Mephisto,' and all of a sudden five Hungarians come charging up, each of them mumbling and just totally impossible to understand."

He anticipates no such problems this year. "In the worst of circumstances, Missy keeps her cool," Block said. "But it's a battle. It's you against the machine." This intensity leads to certain occupational peculiarities. Macri, for instance, says she obsessively translates all speech into steno, mentally keystroking every word that someone is saying to her.

Block remembers that he and his colleagues used to unwind after broadcasts like the Academy Awards with a few drinks, and he proudly points out that barrooms everywhere have started displaying closed captions on their big-screen televisions. But Macri, who has Monday off, won't be participating in any Oscar festivities. She's seen only two of the best-picture nominees, "The Sixth Sense" and "American Beauty." She wanted to see "The Cider House Rules," she said, "but it's not playing anywhere around here. So I bought the book."

—*Matt Dellinger*

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

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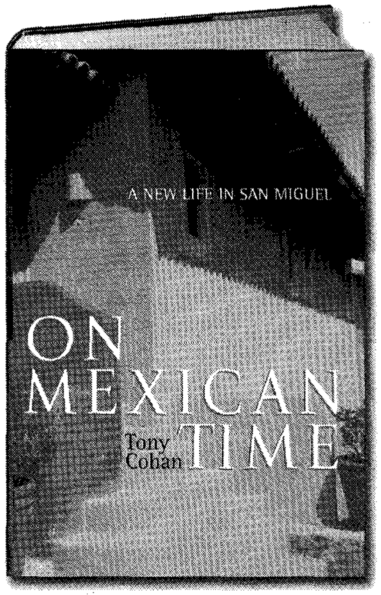

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LETTER FROM MOSCOW

THE BLACK BOX

Vladimir Putin may be Russia's next President, but who's really in charge?

BY DAVID REMNICK

On March 26th, Russia's acting President, Vladimir Putin, will likely be elected President by as many as thirty percentage points. This is an unlovely prospect. Putin is a figure at once bland and severe, whose true predecessor is Yuri Andropov, the ex-K.G.B. chief who ascended to General Secretary with a rhetoric of discipline and rectitude. A career intelligence agent, Putin speaks of the K.G.B. with unambiguous pride and affection. "For better or worse, I was no dissident," he has said. As the Berlin Wall was coming down, Putin, who was stationed in East Germany, in Dresden, wondered when and if Moscow would activate Soviet troops to defend his offices. "Moscow kept silent," he says. "I felt that the country no longer existed." Before leaving for home, Putin helped roll up spy networks, destroy communications, burn documents: "We burned so much stuff that the furnace burst."

Putin's career in the K.G.B. was not especially distinguished (he was recruited in 1975 and he retired in 1991, as a lieutenant colonel), but it clearly shaped his thinking, his manner, his sense of order. Since he became Prime Minister, eight months ago, and then acting President, when Boris Yeltsin resigned on New Year's Eve, Putin's singular achievement has been to lead the war against Chechnya. He promises what so many have yearned for—a modernized version of the iron hand. The other day, Mikhail Gorbachev remarked that Putin's seeming obsession with the restoration of a powerful state was a throwback to the psychology of the Soviet era.

If the Kremlin had a Rose Garden, Putin would be running a Rose Garden campaign. He is visible all the time—meeting with foreign leaders, visiting hospitals, threatening more mayhem in Chechnya—but never campaigning. Putin has spurned commercials and televised debates, and has vowed never to participate in vulgar spectacles that decide only "what is better, Tampax or Snickers?"

The truth is, the campaign is over, and Putin won it on television. A major reason for that victory has been the support of Boris Berezovsky, one of Moscow's new "oligarchs," a small circle of industrialists and bankers who grew fantastically rich during the Yeltsin era by snatching up state properties at preposterously low prices. Berezovsky is the most notorious of the oligarchs, a former mathematician who has made billions in interests ranging from oil to aviation. To make sure he holds on to those interests, he has been very helpful to Putin. Berezovsky owns a string of newspapers and radio stations, and chief among his media holdings is a large interest in state television's Channel 1, or ORT, the most powerful channel on the dial. Last summer, Berezovsky unleashed a propaganda blitz that obliterated the opposition as surely as Russia's tanks obliterated Grozny. His motives were simple. Without access to the Kremlin, a tycoon is lost. Berezovsky needed a friend in power who would not only tolerate him but indulge him, as Yeltsin did.

Until the propaganda war began, Berezovsky seemed lost. The most popular party in the country was Fatherland-All Russia, led by former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov. Primakov, a veteran of Soviet politics, had threatened to put a few of the oligarchs in jail; when he was in office, he had unleashed the prosecutor general on Berezovsky, among other Kremlin officials, to look for evidence of bribery, kickbacks, money-laundering, or any other illegalities. In Luzhkov, Berezovsky saw another enemy and a potential President who would challenge his control of various properties and corporations.

To cut into Primakov and Luzhkov's support, Berezovsky enlisted the help of Sergei Dorenko, a forty-year-old newscaster-propagandist, to start a weekend news-magazine show, a sort of “ ‘60 Minutes’ Meets Jerry Springer.” There was nothing Dorenko would not say or do. He showed a film of the prosecutor general, Yuri Skuratov, having semi-successful sex with a couple of chirpy prostitutes. To prove that Primakov, who had undergone hip surgery, was not fit to run for President, Dorenko showed an endless and gory sequence of surgeons sawing through bones and ligaments. The message was clear: Wasn’t one old, sick President enough? He accused Primakov of participating in an assassination plot against the Georgian President, Eduard Shevardnadze, and of insufficient hatred of Chechen terrorists, and accused Luzhkov of ordering the murder of Paul Tatum, an American who co-owned a Moscow hotel.

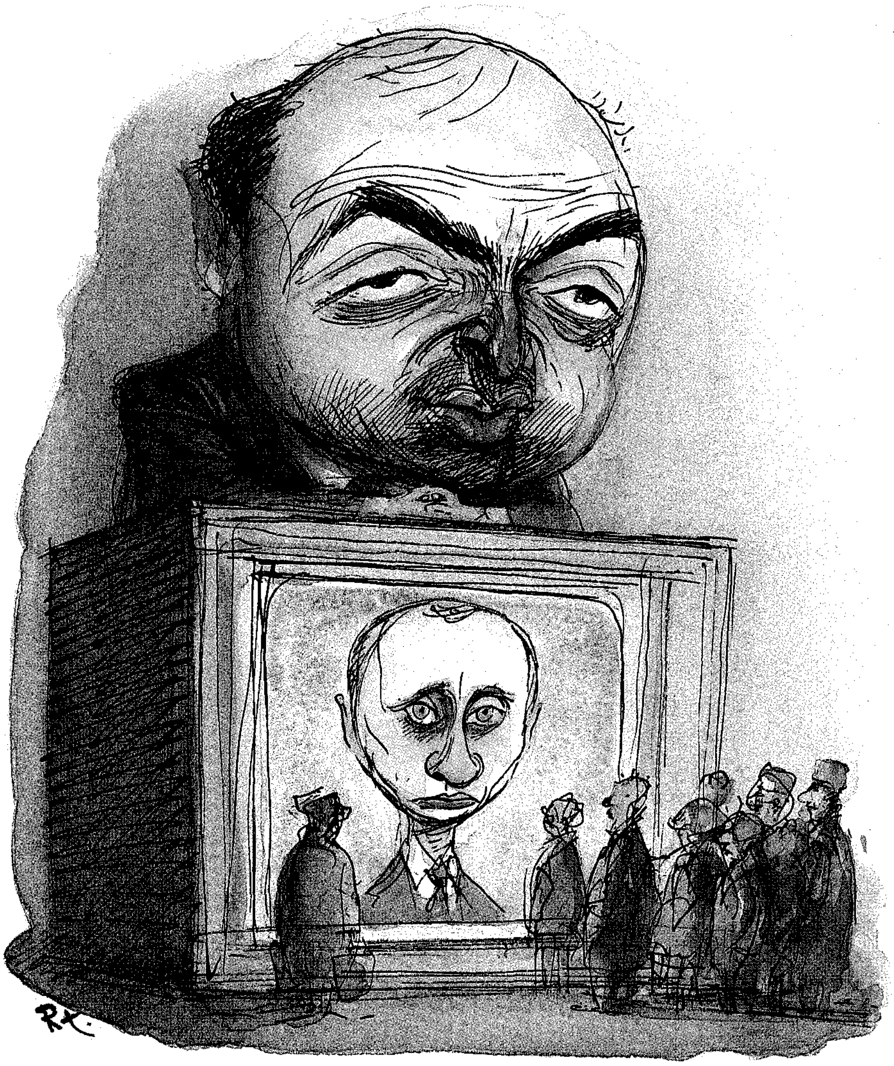
There is no mystery about the program’s chain of command. A month after the Luzhkov accusation was aired, one Moscow newspaper published transcripts of telephone conversations between Berezovsky and Dorenko in which they talked about how best to use television to link Luzhkov to the Tatum killing. Dorenko told reporters that, yes, such a conversation had taken place; Berezovsky said that “the context, which allows one to interpret it in a particular way, is wrong.” When I asked Berezovsky recently about his working relationship with Dorenko, he said, “As an owner of mass media, I have a chance to speak with people in the company. But I will never give anyone directions, orders—never! Not one time! Sometimes, I may *explain* my position. If they are against that position, well, O.K. But the difference between me and the man on the street is that I can do that.”

The campaign worked. “People watch this stuff and they believe it,” Leonid Parfyonov, a well-known television producer and personality, said. “In 1916, most Russians believed that the tsarina had been the secret agent of Germany. They believed the stories about American evil. Our people tend to believe the worst garbage that’s shovelled at them.” Primakov went from being the most trusted politician in Russia to quitting the race. Luzhkov’s ratings plummeted. Neither one was capable of heading a winning ticket. What remained was Putin and a long list of also-rans.

RICHARD THOMPSON

“Our media are something different from yours,” Berezovsky told me. “It wasn’t possible just to go on the air and calmly explain things. This was a huge war of interests, a dangerous war.”

The rumors in the television business are that Berezovsky paid Dorenko more than a million dollars, but no one knows for sure. “Whatever it is, it’s a good investment for them,” Parfyonov said. “After all, look what’s at stake: a major share of the world’s oil reserves, forty per cent of the world’s natural gas, one-sixth of the world’s landmass. The stakes are high!”



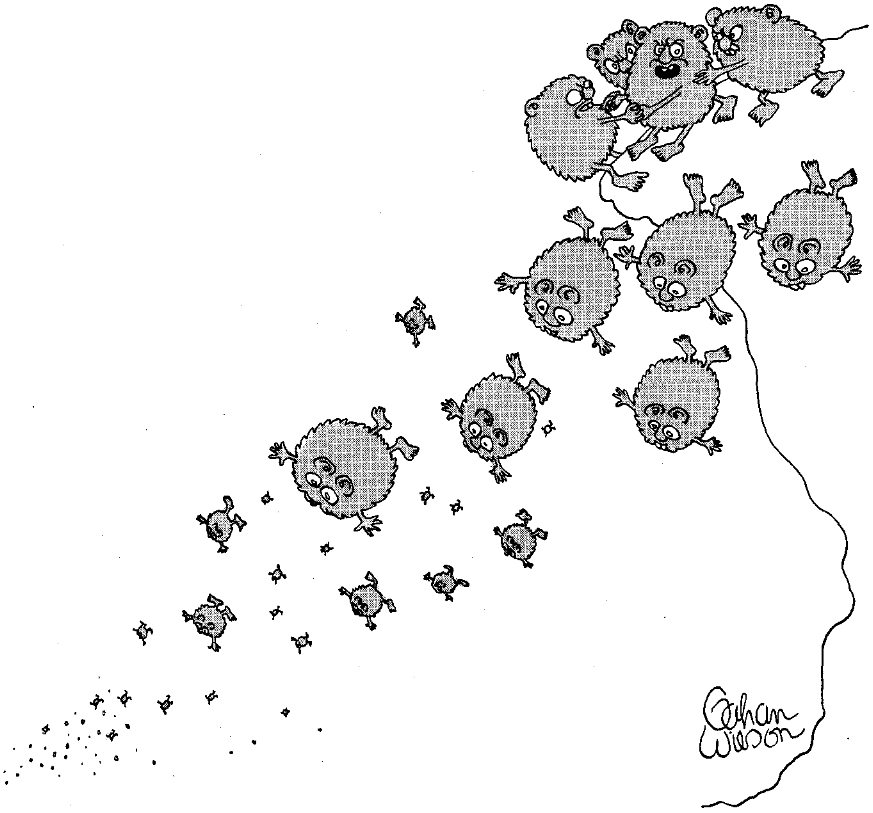
In a way, the campaign is already over, and Putin won it with the help of Boris Berezovsky, Moscow’s television tycoon.

Sergei Dorenko works out of a shabby set of offices and studios at the Ostankino television center, on the north side of the city. Last week, he took me into an editing room, and there a couple of young staffers were preparing the ritual assault on Luzhkov.

“This is where we manipulate the mass consciousness!” Dorenko boomed, with a jack-o’-lantern smile.

Like his boss, Berezovsky, Dorenko is sly and self-knowing, and does not pretend to righteousness. He is tall and dark; with a bit more polish, he could be a local anchor in, say, Tampa. On the air, his style is without affect, an expression he learned well in his years on the main news program, “Vremya.” On his own show, Dorenko’s deadpan is a counterpoint to the visceral film clips: the sex, the violence, the absurdity.

“Television is a show,” he said. “It is a spectacle that you watch. People watch TV, and at the same time they are talking to their wives, they’re pouring themselves some tea, they might get up and go to the bathroom, and who knows what else. To get their attention, you have to jump out of the set, grab them by



"Nobody told me about this!"

• •

the collar, get them close, eye to eye, and talk in simple language."

Dorenko was not the first to show the tape of Skuratov and the prostitutes. The Kremlin, with Putin the head of Russian intelligence, is thought to have leaked it first to Channel 2, RTR, which played it last March, late at night. Dorenko brought it to prime time. The raw material is pathetic enough ("I haven't done this in a while," Skuratov meekly tells the prostitutes. "I may not succeed"), but, for dramatic effect, Dorenko spliced in his own comments and the speeches of Luzhkov and other politicians who defended the prosecutor. Dorenko began the report by telling viewers that perhaps parents ought to ask children to leave the room, "because after seeing the prosecutor general like this it will be hard to bring up your children as patriots." Everyone manages to look squalid.

"I'm a difficult client for you," Skuratov says as the girls try valiantly to arouse him. Finally, they succeed, and so, after a fashion, does he.

"I made it for the first time in a while!" Skuratov exclaims after much moaning. "I think we'll see each other again," he adds hopefully.

"He was a good old guy," one of the prostitutes told Dorenko at a subsequent filmed encounter on the street. "I felt sorry for him that he found himself in such a mess."

Naturally, Skuratov became a national joke. Even people who might have hoped that someone would pursue the shadowy allegations against Berezovsky and others in and around the Kremlin could not help laughing about Skuratov.

Primakov was so furious about Dorenko's attacks that, according to Dorenko, he arranged investigations of him, tapping his phones and examining his financial records for tax fraud. Now that Putin is cruising to victory, the show has become tamer. Dorenko is happy. And his boss is happy, too.

"Boris Berezovsky and I are friends, and professionally we are of one mind on the most important questions—we share the same Sermon on the Mount," Dorenko said. "But I do what I like. I follow my own thoughts. Berezovsky calls me only to tell me that I have a first-rate program and that I am a genius. He tells me that I'm a genius all the time."

I asked if he would ever even mildly criticize Berezovsky on the air.

"Only if I resign first and do it on another channel," Dorenko said. "By the way, is there a lot of criticizing Ted Turner on CNN? And what attacks are there against Rupert Murdoch on Fox?"

In the Soviet Union, and now in post-Soviet Russia, television has been an instrument of propaganda and battle. Since the days of Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretaries have used the medium to send a unified message to every corner of the empire. Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, did that, too, but, just as important, he used it to promote himself as a new, more vigorous leader. Both Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, paid close attention to their televised images; they often called the men who ran state television to order this camera angle or that clip. To his credit, Gorbachev also sanctioned shows like "View" and "Before and After Midnight," which were the first to broadcast unvarnished reports on the Stalin era, the war in Afghanistan, and organized crime.

Within two or three years, however, Gorbachev's monologues had become a target of mockery. In May, 1989, the televised focus of the revolution was the first session of the Congress of Peoples Deputies, at which speakers lambasted everything from the K.G.B. and the Communist Party to Gorbachev himself. For weeks, one could walk down the streets of Moscow and in every window see the blue haze of televisions and hear the sound of impassioned speeches. Yeltsin, who was now saying forbidden things about the Party leadership in blunt language, was banned from state television, but Leningrad's "The Fifth Wheel" dared to show him. And so in Moscow people bought special antennae just to pull in "The Fifth Wheel." In retaliation, in October of 1989 state television showed a film of Yeltsin speaking at Johns Hopkins University, and seeming exhausted, incoherent, and possibly inebriated.

"But even that backfired," Oleg Dobrodeyev, who is now the chairman of RTR, told me. "Soviet propaganda had ossified to such a degree that it failed to recognize that, traditionally, in this country people have a perfectly sanguine attitude to people who drink. To drink means you are a good guy, one of us. Non-drinkers are thought to be underhanded, strange. The majority of people liked Yeltsin even more after this."

In the years that followed, television became a crucial prize of political struggle. "To 'take the Kremlin,' you must 'take television,'" Gorbachev's adviser Alexander Yakovlev once said. And so it happened. Yeltsin developed RTR as the first real alternative to Soviet state television, and that led to an alternative news broadcast, called "Vesti" ("News") and the rise of a Russian challenge to central Soviet power.

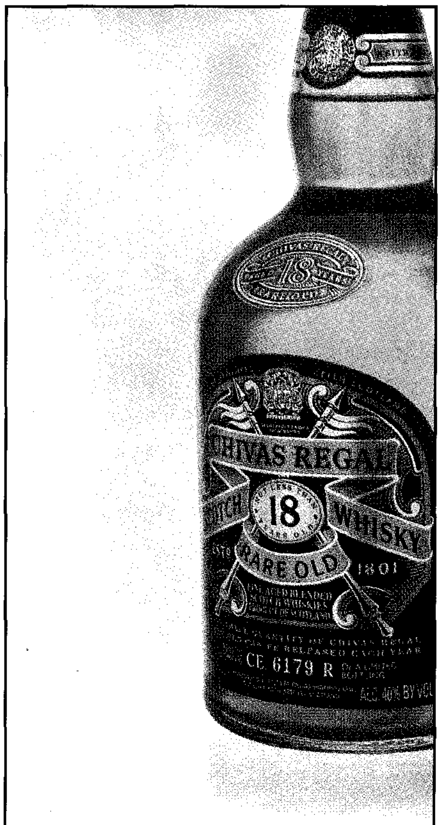
As the first generation of Russian oligarchs looked for opportunities to buy properties during the unprecedented wave of privatization in the early nineties, a few recognized that the easiest way to get the political influence they needed was to buy newspapers, magazines, and television stations—or to start new ones. The banker Vladimir Gusinsky, who had once been an obscure theatre director, launched NTV, in 1993. It was around this time that Boris Berezovsky began to invest in media, too.

As the 1996 elections approached—as Yeltsin's health and the Russian economy both corroded, as the first Chechen war was showing up the Army's own implosion—Yeltsin appeared doomed. His popularity ratings fell to single digits as he prepared to face the Communist Party candidate, Gennady Zyuganov. Berezovsky, Gusinsky, and several other Moscow oligarchs decided that their only chance to hold on to their fortunes was to set aside their rivalries and unite behind Yeltsin. They ran and paid for the Kremlin campaign with more than a hundred million dollars and orchestrated a slavishly loyal media effort. Losing the election, they thought, would force them all to emigrate. After the first round of voting, Yeltsin suffered a heart attack and dropped out of sight. He was near death. Not to worry. Television provided a report that was a cross between Soviet propaganda and Gogolian comedy: the President, viewers learned, had a cold, he was tired. Yeltsin was hoarse, his spokesman said, but he still had "a firm handshake."

Within months, the oligarchs were handsomely rewarded. They not only enriched themselves through easy access to state properties—the privatization deals for oil wells, refineries, factories, and raw materials were like so many billion-dollar party favors—but also widened their media holdings. Yeltsin signed a decree that tripled the hours that Gusinsky's NTV could broadcast, and Berezovsky strengthened his control as the largest private shareholder in state television's Channel 1. Berezovsky has even befriended foreign media barons; he was a guest at Rupert Murdoch's wedding to Wendi Deng.

Gusinsky and Berezovsky have long since forgotten their alliance of 1996. They are mortal enemies now, and their television stations reflect their differences. Berezovsky's ORT, and especially "The Sergei Dorenko Program," is a focussed extension of his political aims. Gusinsky's NTV, although it is perfectly capable of airing a politically motivated report, next to ORT is an exemplar of probity and rigor. Its weekend news-magazine show is called "Itogi" ("Summing Up"), and the host is an intelligent, if strangely portentous, man named Yevgeny Kiselyov. Comparing last week's "Sergei Dorenko Program," on Saturday, to "Itogi," on Sunday, would be like comparing Jenny Jones to Ted Koppel. Both programs carried reports, for instance, on a disastrous battle in early March in the Chechen area around the Argun Gorge. The Russian military authorities lied for days about the casualties. Dorenko, like certain American reporters in Vietnam, parroted the official line about enemy losses and Russian heroism; "Itogi" reported bluntly, if sympathetically, that eighty-four Russian soldiers, all from the same company in Pskov, had been killed.

I met recently with Kiselyov and Igor Malashenko, a Gusinsky executive, and both were quick to condemn Dorenko and Berezovsky's manipulation of ORT. The NTV people—and, in fact, nearly all members of the "liberal media"—routinely say that the 1996 campaign was not so much an election as a kind of civil war, and that to have attempted any kind of fairness in the media would have meant suicide, a re-



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turn to the past. Now, they insist, it is time for new rules.

"For Berezovsky, television is a gun, a weapon, a propaganda machine," Malashenko said. Ten years ago, when I first met Malashenko, he was working as an aide in the Communist Party's Central Committee headquarters; now he wears a three-button Italian suit, and his new offices have more brass and marble than a palazzo in Milan. "Berezovsky's ambition is always to be the largest fish in the pond, to have the most influence and power, with money being the byproduct," he went on. "For him, money just goes with everything automatically. He is a gambler. He enjoys what he is doing. He enjoys the game."

Journalists and businesspeople who follow the oligarchs closely say that while Berezovsky wields enormous power in various industries it is not exactly clear what he owns. In Russia, the notion of transparency in business hardly exists. "Berezovsky buys people more than he buys companies," Malashenko said. "There is a joke about post-Soviet life that is by now widespread: It's cheaper to privatize the managers than to privatize a company."

Even Vladimir Posner, who is known to Americans as Phil Donahue's former sidekick, and who now hosts a talk show on Channel 1, says that there are no illusions about what has happened. "Dorenko played a substantial role in the collapse of the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition's drive for power," Posner said. "I can think of no other journalist, if that's what you want to call him, anywhere in the world who could inflict that kind of damage and destroy a potential Presidential movement."

As for Berezovsky, Posner said, "He is a tactician who wants to protect his turf and gain as much power as he can. He believes the country should be run by businessmen, the Russian version of 'What's good for General Motors is good for America.' He kicked and clawed his way into using the media and they're his best tool."

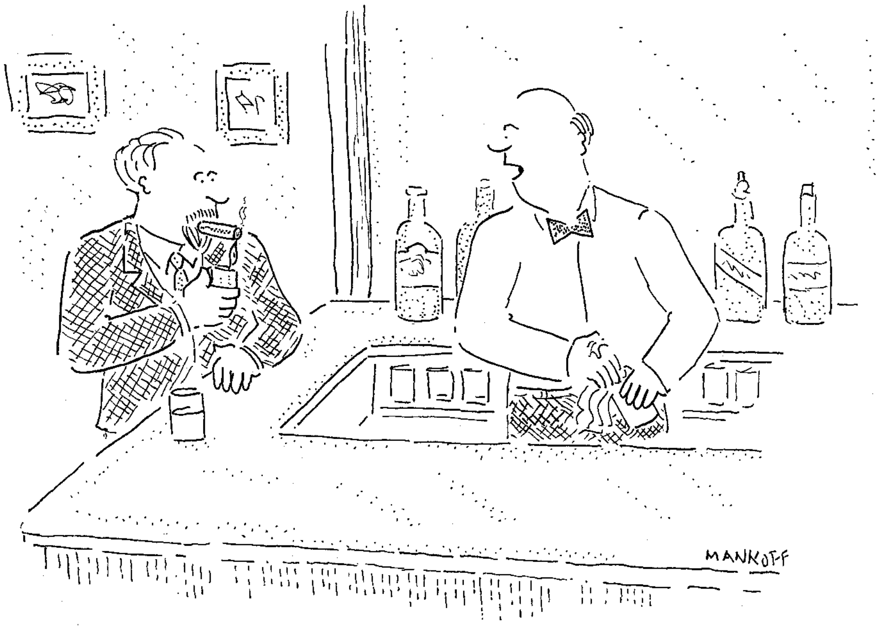
I first met Berezovsky four years ago, at a tsarist-era mansion downtown that he had converted into a lavish "business club." Outside that club in 1994, a bomb, apparently intended for him, exploded and decapitated his driver. I met him most recently a couple of weeks ago, in a more tranquil setting—Princeton University, where he had been invited to give a lecture.

Although in Moscow Berezovsky is usually surrounded by bodyguards, he arrived in Princeton in a stretch limousine, accompanied only by an associate from London. Berezovsky is short and nearly bald, and has dark, intense eyes. Even his enemies, who consider him evil, say that he is extremely smart. He has not merely been close to power; he has held powerful positions in the government, including deputy secretary of the Security Council. He recently won a seat in the Duma. His opponents claim that the only reason he wanted a place in the Duma was that it provides immunity from prosecution.

Wearing a fine, dark suit, Berezovsky stepped up to the lectern, before a full house of students and alumni, and delivered a talk on recent Russian politics that cast the role of the oligarchs in a loving light: during the past fifteen years, he said, the Soviet Union and then Russia have been undergoing a revolution. Finally, after many false starts, and after a series of Prime Ministers who were either too lacking in will or too mired in the past, Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin—and "now, for the first time, the consolidation of power has taken place," Berezovsky said. "What some call a totalitarian dictatorship is nothing more than the consolidation of power."

Berezovsky has a keen sense of public relations, and he understands well that he and his fellow-oligarchs are known, even in the West, for grabbing up valuable properties for a song. And so instead of denying anything Berezovsky tried for spin: "Why was there a civil war after the revolution in 1917, and no civil war after the modern revolution? There was no civil war following privatization. . . . In 1917, property was taken from concrete people. This time, it was taken from a state, a faceless entity; no one thought of it as his own." Sure, he went on, Russia has "violated the canons of liberalism on the way to democracy," and "these extremes will happen, but they will not stop the process."

After the lecture, Berezovsky and a few members of the faculty and administration walked across the campus. Students whizzed by on bikes. The birds were singing. And Boris Berezovsky—Satan, Luzhkov has called him—was on his way to the Faculty Club for dinner. Not since I saw Mikhail Gorbachev fly into Santa Barbara eight years ago aboard the Capitalist Tool, the Forbes jet, have I felt such a strange sense of displacement. Berezovsky, for his part, seemed completely at ease. He did his best to charm his hosts. Someone asked him if he minded being called an oligarch. He smiled shyly.



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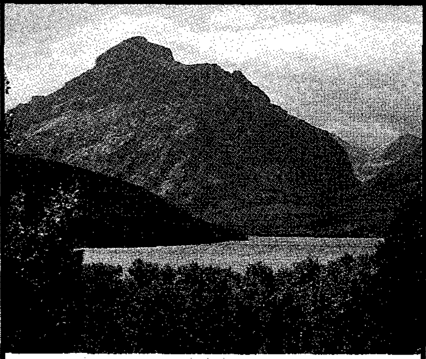

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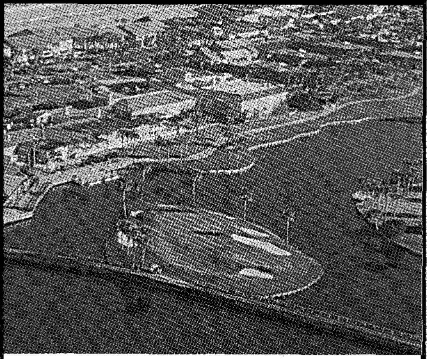

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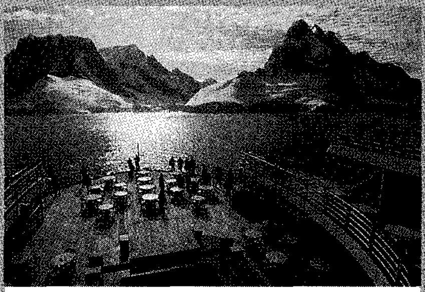

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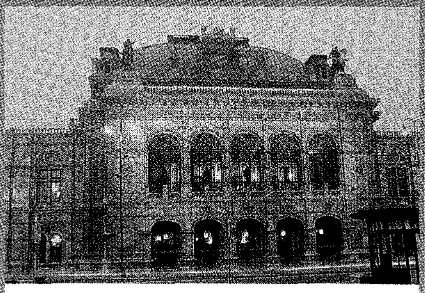

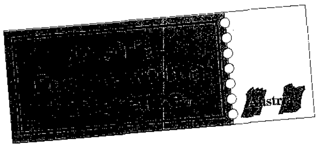

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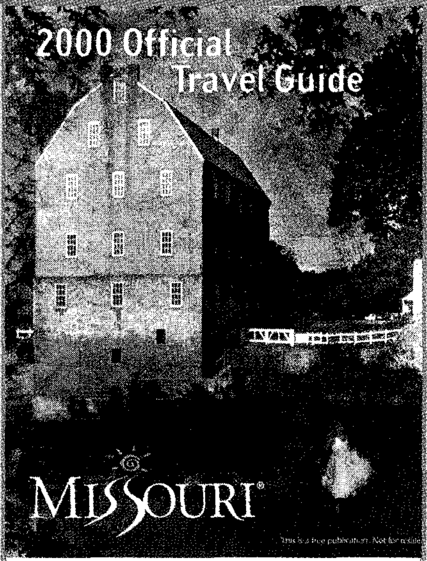

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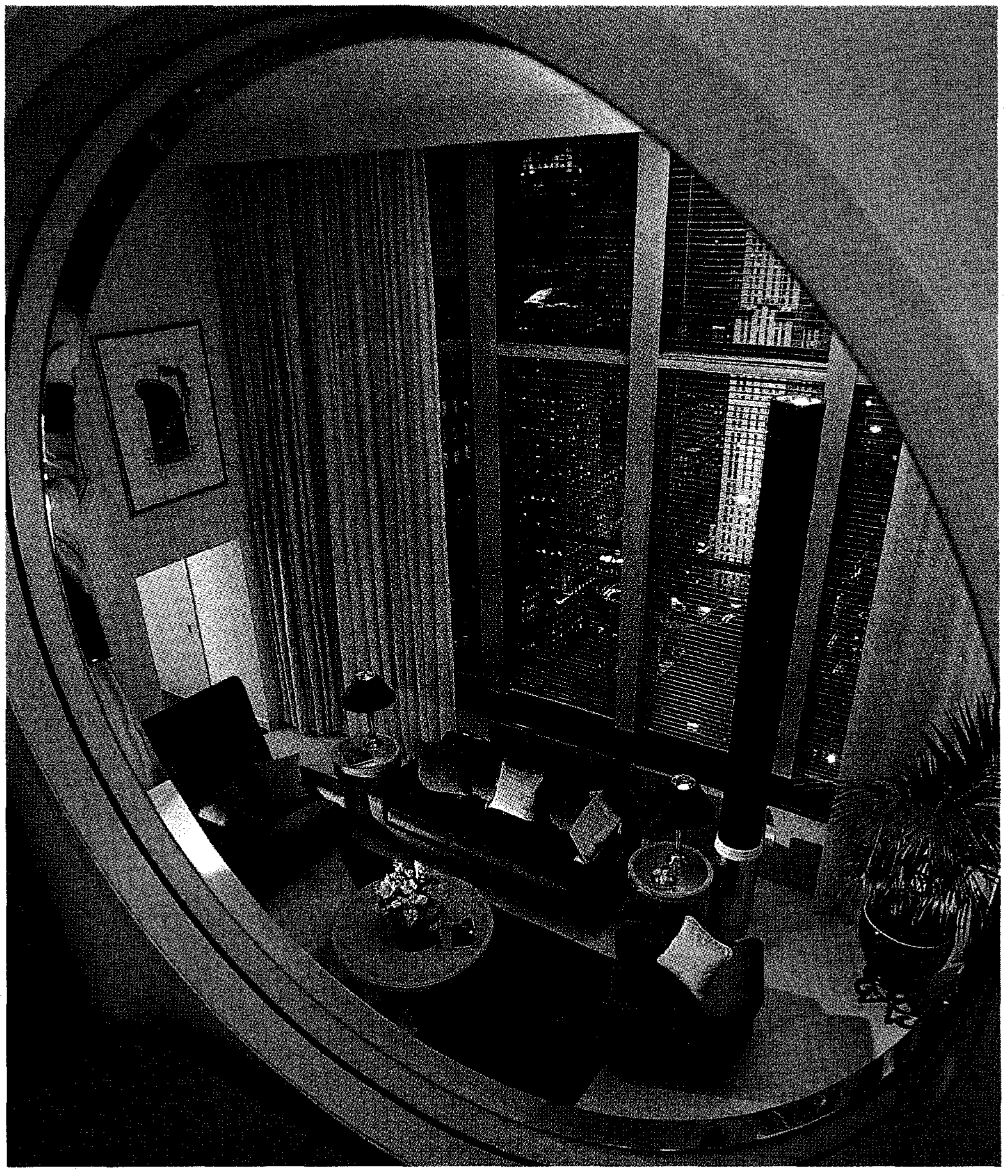

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"Oligarch?" he said. "I used to be against the term, but now I accept it. I can't fight *everyone!*" He went on, "We are not different from the American oligarchs. We are completely the same. They were rational, and we are rational. We spent our power on privatization because it was more rational than building factories. Our behavior was completely rational, like Morgan's or Carnegie's. Finally, we will start to compete. Maybe the rules were wrong, but we *used* those rules."

Someone asked a rather gentle question about the occasional investigations pointed in his direction, and Berezovsky shrugged. "As far as I am concerned," he said, "I never felt that I did something against the law. No one ever proved that I did something wrong. There were lots of opportunities to prove I did something wrong, and they never did."

Dessert was served, and afterward Berezovsky offered me a ride back to the city. As we sped along Route 1, he told me that his father had been a construction engineer, working on factories from Moscow to Uzbekistan; his mother was a nurse in a pediatric institute. Berezovsky got his doctorate in systems-theory mathematics in 1973 (he is fifty-four) and worked until the late eighties in academia. He has six children, by three wives, and lives, "like all the other oligarchs," near the Rublyov Highway, in an enormous, well-guarded house. He has various other residences, including an interest in a thirty-million-dollar estate in Cap d'Antibes, a couple of planes, and a yacht.

"In cash, I have tens of millions of dollars," he said, "and, as far as shares in my businesses, they are worth billions of dollars, but it is hard to say exactly how much. It is hard to estimate a Russian company. The values change every day."

As Berezovsky grew richer in the mid-nineties, he made closer acquaintances in Yeltsin's circle. In the last couple of years, Berezovsky's relationship with Yeltsin and Yeltsin's daughter, Tatyana, has grown so close and influential that, when television commentators referred on the air recently to the "family," it was understood that he was a member.

We headed into the Lincoln Tunnel. Berezovsky yawned. "I am thinking about politics less and less now," he said. "And this is a sign of stability."

One can understand his sense of achievement. While Sergei Dorenko was busy destroying Primakov and Luzhkov, Berezovsky was masterminding the creation of a new party, the Unity Bloc, as a vehicle for Putin.

"I want to transform the media from power to a business," Berezovsky said contentedly. "Change priorities. For me, mass media is a political instrument, but, now that politics have been decided, we're not moving backward. Mass media will be good business."

Did that mean that he was retreating to the boardroom? Was he getting out of Kremlin politics?

"Capital will have great influence on power. How can it be otherwise?" he said. "Doesn't Bill Gates, and Microsoft, have political power? Doesn't General Motors have political power?"

Berezovsky dropped me off on the West Side before heading east to his hotel. In a couple of days, he was flying off to California for a conference hosted by Michael Milken.

In Moscow, Berezovsky's media are trying to create a heroic image for Putin, who is the antithesis, in almost every way, of his predecessor. Yeltsin was a memorable physical presence, a *muzhik,* a real Russian man—bearish, provincial, crude, funny, erratic, undisciplined, a drinker, a Communist Party apparatchik who became the Party's biggest enemy. He was a man of rages, intrigues, courageous confrontations, benders, impulsive decisions. He behaved less like a General Secretary than like a tsar. Putin is blessed with the sort of slight frame and unmemorable face that perfectly match who he was: a colorless mid-level spy. Born in 1952, Putin comes from an ordinary urban family (his father was a factory foreman in Leningrad); he speaks fluent German and some English, works ceaselessly, doesn't drink much, enjoys skiing and judo.

Although most Russians entertain few illusions anymore about the crimes of the past, not least the crimes of the K.G.B., they don't care much anymore, either. Most do not see a career in the intelligence services as a political liability. Many people I talked to said that Putin reminded them of the cool and

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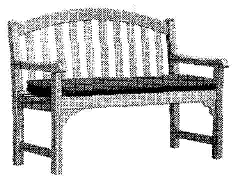

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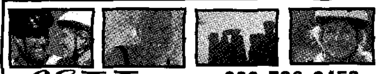

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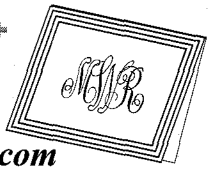

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efficient hero, Stirlitz, of a 1973 television serial, "Seventeen Moments of Spring." Masha Volkenstein, who has worked as a commercial and political public-opinion executive for the past decade, told me that she was surprised when people in focus groups told her that one of the reasons they liked Putin was his "Germanness"—his Germanic appearance, his Germanic work habits, his close contact with Germans while working as a spy in Dresden.

"This is fairly amazing, considering the history of Germans in this country," she said. And yet it seems that, for Russians, after enduring the embarrassment of a President whose public performances ranged so often from the drunken to the incomprehensible, Putin's Germanic posture, his severity, is a political plus. Putin is like the antagonist, Stoltz, in Ivan Goncharov's nineteenth-century novel "Oblomov." The hero, Oblomov, sleeps, naps, dozes. He seems never to get out of his nightgown. He can barely summon the energy to speak, much less work. He is the epitome of Russian sloth and lost opportunity. Stoltz is the Germanic ideal: energetic, efficient, neat. In Russian politics, Oblomov has retired to his dacha. Stoltz will win the Kremlin.

Putin has revealed himself only slowly. Recently, in an attempt to compile a kind of official biography, he met for a total of twenty-four hours with two reporters from the Berezovsky-owned paper, *Kommersant*, and those transcripts have now been published.

In the book, Putin says that he first became interested in intelligence work when he was in ninth grade: "I'd read the books, seen the movies." To be an officer meant honor and romance to him, and it still does. He describes how, as a teen-ager, he walked into the Leningrad K.G.B. offices to offer his services. "Some kind of old guy came out, and although it seemed strange he listened to me and took me seriously," Putin says. The man told Putin that they didn't take volunteers, and that he would have to wait until he had graduated from university.

"What's the recommended course of study?" Putin asked.

"Law" came the answer.

"I understand."

When he had almost finished college, he was invited to come in and begin work.

After so many years of listening to reformist, and even mainstream, Russian political figures criticize the K.G.B. and agonize over its history, I find it disturbing to hear Putin describe and defend the K.G.B. so blithely. When pressed, he'll admit that a few instances, like the K.G.B.'s treatment of Andrei Sakharov, were "rough," but he does not volunteer such comments.

Putin invariably blames idiotic Communist Party officials for wrongdoing under the old system. He portrays intelligence agents as upstanding patriots intent on defending the state and remains proud of the countless Soviet citizens who worked as *stukachi,* ground-level informers for the K.G.B. "You know that ninety per cent of all information was gained with the help of agents among Soviet citizens?" he says, with obvious admiration. "Agents work in the interest of the state."

Unlike Gorbachev and Yeltsin, both of whom had close relatives who were sent to camps during the Stalin era, Putin is defensive even about the peak years of the purges. At a private session with writers at the Moscow PEN club recently, he said, "Of course, one must not forget about the year 1937, but one must not keep alluding only to this experience, pretending that we do not need state-security bodies. All seventeen years of my work are connected with this organization. It would be insincere for me to say that I don't want to defend it."

In East Germany, Putin saw firsthand the loss of the Communist world's place in technology and economics. He witnessed the system's rot as it was happening. "I already understood in Germany that there was no future for this system, and that there was no future for the Soviet Union," he says in the biography.

In 1990, Putin returned to Leningrad, and, for a year and a half, he had a double role at the university: he was the rector's "international relations" adviser, as a cover, and at the same time he kept an eye on foreign students, even recruiting some. He left that post to work for his old law professor Anatoly Sobchak, a reformist who had become the city's mayor. Putin resigned his commission the same year.

Putin is not so much a moralist as a loyalist. In the new book, he calls Oleg Kalugin, a former K.G.B. general who renounced the agency in 1990, a "traitor"; the same goes for Andrei Babitsky, the Radio Liberty reporter in Chechnya who was arrested by the Russian Army. Babitsky's reporting on the Chechens, Putin says, was "more dangerous than firing a machine gun." On the other hand, Pavel Borodin, a Yeltsin aide who invited Putin to work for the Kremlin in 1996, is judged by another standard. Although Swiss authorities have long wanted to question Borodin about a bribery case involving the construction company Mabetex, Putin's view is that "there is a golden rule, a founding principle of any democratic system, and it's called the presumption of innocence."

How a Putin Presidency will turn out for Boris Berezovsky is not altogether clear. Moscow is a city of terrific political gossip, most of it melodramatic. "We have an authoritarian system—soft authoritarianism—controlling political life," Igor Malashenko, of NTV, said to me. "People are nervous because they have no idea what Putin will do." One scenario has Putin moving against Berezovsky, just to show how tough he can be.

"There is not a close relationship between me and Putin," Berezovsky told me. "I am asked, 'If Putin comes to power, will he put you in jail?' I have no guarantees that this will not take place."

But it is hard to believe. Berezovsky and Dorenko provided an important service to Putin. "The political game is done, and we won," Dorenko told me. "I feel like a person who can stay in Russia now. If Luzhkov and Primakov had come to power, I would have had to hide abroad. And I don't like abroad."

In the past month, Berezovsky and his partner, Roman Abramovich, have bought up more than sixty per cent of the aluminum business—the biggest industry after oil and gas. Putin's Anti-Monopoly Ministry had no problem with the deal, and Putin, in his new book, makes a friendly gesture to the oligarch. He and Berezovsky talk fairly regularly, Putin says. And why not? "He has a lively mind," Putin says, "and many suggestions." ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

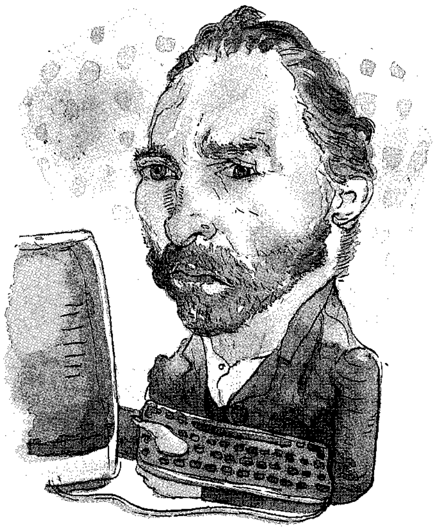
VAN GOGH IN AOL

BY NOAH BAUMBACH

It may be that people attracted to the Internet are by their natures a lonelier group of people.—*Letter to the Times, February 22, 2000.*

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Arles is bleak, and the blasted mistral keeps me indoors. I go days without speaking a word to anyone. Thank you for the money. With it, I bought a blazing tangerine iMac, which I am E-mailing you on right now. You were right, the Hotmail account was very simple to set up and free, so I can still survive on five francs a day.



BARRY BLITT

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Just got an Instant Message from Gauguin, who clearly has me on his Buddy List. Do you know if there's a way to block this? I like Gauguin, but he is so depressed and seems to stay on-line for hours. I go on at random times in the day just to check my E-mail or to survey the landscape (what vibrant colors these Web sites have!) and then there's that blasted chime and, voilà, his grating " 'Sup?" Did you get the pictures I sent you? One is of my room here in Arles. That brilliant, burning orange object in the middle is the iMac. I painted it with the enthusiasm of a Marseillaise eating bouillabaisse, the tangerine like a halo over the computer. Thanks again. :)

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Gauguin has come to Arles to live with me. Next to my tangerine iMac his magnificent blueberry iBook is quite simply music. What a still-life they will make. But Gauguin insists on taking the iBook with him to Starbucks. Yes, they have one in Arles now, too! I would paint infinity, a computer of the richest, intensest blueberry, like a star in the

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Whoops, pressed "Send" accidentally. Was going to say, "like a star in the azure sky." By the way, that NPR petition you forwarded me is a hoax.

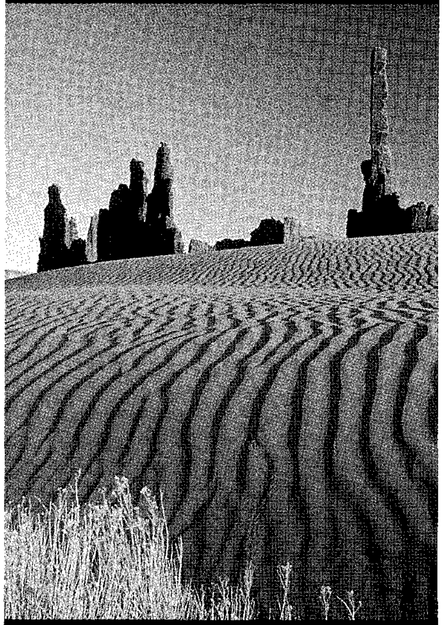
To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Sorry for the delay. Gauguin is very depressed and spends hours on-line. (I know, I know, we should get another line!) God knows what he does there, but the junk mail I keep receiving from polynesianhoneys.com gives me an idea. Visited an Impressionist chat room today. Depressing. These people know nothing of painting. Felt less bad on discovering most were seven. Normally I wouldn't send something like this, but I thought you might get a kick out of it. Degas forwarded it:

How to Determine Your Star Wars Name:

FIRST NAME

Take the first three letters of your



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first name & add the first two letters of your last name.

LAST NAME

Take the first two letters of your mom's maiden name & add the first three letters of the city in which you were born.

How to Determine Your Star Wars Honorific Name:

*Take the last three letters of your last name & reverse them, then add the name of the first car you drove/owned/rode in.

* Insert the word "of."

* Tack on the name of the last medication you took.

P.S. Don't worry I bcc'ed you.

Vinva Cagro
or
Hgopeugeot of DayQuil

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Surviving mostly on coffee and absinthe. And since Pissarro turned me on to Kozmo.com I don't have to brave that miserable mistral. You mentioned getting a busy signal the last time you tried to call me. (I know, I know, I should get another line!) But it's Gauguin. I mean, I have a curiosity about the Internet, but he's addicted, IMHO! He is teaching me Quark, however, which I find fascinating.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

Gauguin and I quarrelled after I fragged him with a rocket launcher while playing Quake III. He says my computer's faster, so it isn't fair. (Doom is more his game, but the mulberry-tree-yellow graphics in Quake III are worthy of Renoir!) In any event, I waved an open razor in his direction, and he left. I'll miss his company, but now that he's gone I can go on-line whenever I'm inclined. Did you get the pictures I sent you? I don't think those girls are really in college. And what about that dancing baby? Eerie.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

In your last E-mail you wrote:

<<What is lol?>>

It means "laugh out loud." Something I do less and less of now. :(

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

I hate to admit it, but I'm missing Gauguin's Instant Messages. Now that he's in Tahiti, I don't think he's on the computer much anymore. Either that or I no longer make the cut on his Buddy List. BTW could you send a little more money? I need new paintbrushes and a faster modem.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincentvgo@hotmail.com

I know you try your hardest to sell my work, but have you considered eBay? I put two sunflower paintings, "The Provençal Girl," and one "Sower" on there. The "Sower" is already up to 43 francs! Then typed in Seurat and saw that some tiny sketch of his called "Monkey" is at 230! Depressing.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincent2@VanGo.com

I've started to work again. Check out my home page (and note new address). I designed it with a soft malachite green, a fiery iMac raspberry, and a troubled Prussian lilac. I may've mastered the brushstroke and HTML, but am a novice with Java. There's always more to learn.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincent2@VanGo.com

Hey, I won a bid on the Christina Aguilera CD! Mint condition, still in the shrink-wrap, too! I'm sorry, but I need another 500 francs.

To: Theovg23@aol.com
From: Vincent2@VanGo.com

Someone called MadDaddy bought "Peasant Shoes" for 27 francs and then refused to pay. Sent me into a rage. We flamed each other back and forth and eBay is going to ban him from future auctions. Little consolation, as I need the money. I got the last laugh, however, as the actual shoes went for 150 francs! ♦

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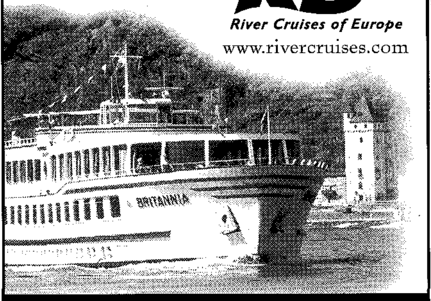

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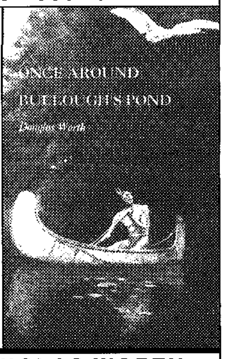

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

THE MAGIC BAGEL

If I found it again, would my daughter change her life?

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

My wife and I came up with differing interpretations of a conversation I had with our older daughter, Abigail, not long ago after a dim-sum lunch in Chinatown. Abigail, who lives in San Francisco, was in New York to present a paper at a conference. As a group of us trooped back toward Greenwich Village, where she'd grown up and where my wife, Alice, and I still live, Abigail and I happened to be walking together. "Let's get this straight, Abigail," I said, after we'd finished off some topic and had gone along in silence for a few moments. "If I can find those gnarly little dark pumpernickel bagels that we used to get at Tanenbaum's, you'll move back to New York. Right?"

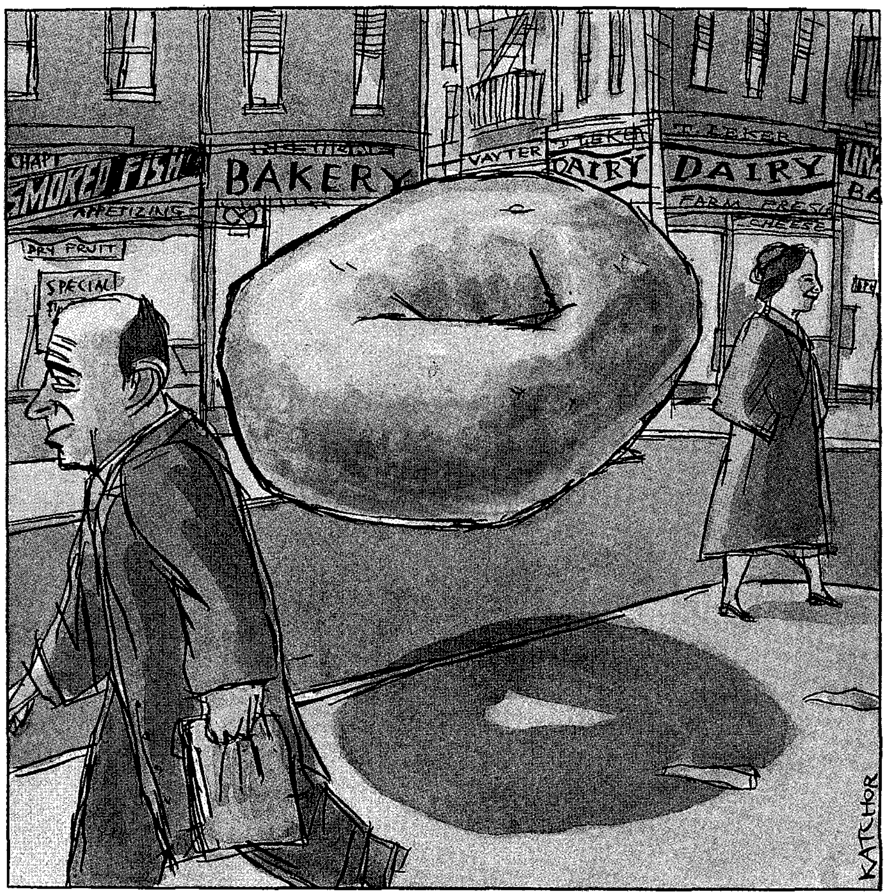
"Absolutely," Abigail said.

When I reported that exchange to Alice, she said that Abigail was speaking ironically. I found it difficult to believe that anybody could be ironic about those bagels. They were almost black. Misshapen. Oniony. Abigail adored them. Both of my daughters have always taken bagels seriously. My younger daughter, Sarah, also lives in California—she's in Los Angeles—and she often complains about the bagels there being below her standards. For a while, I brought along a dozen bagels for Sarah whenever I went to L.A., but I finally decided that this policy was counterproductive. "If a person prefers to live in California, which happens to be thousands of miles from her very own parents," I told her, "it seems to me appropriate that such a person eat California bagels. I understand that in some places out there if you buy a dozen wheat-germ bagels you get one bee-pollen bagel free."

Abigail, it should be noted, always had bagel standards at least as high as Sarah's. I have previously documented the moment when I realized that she was actually a New Yorker (until she was four or five, I had somehow thought of her as being from the same place I'm from, Kansas City): we were back in Missouri visiting my family, and she said, "Daddy, how come in Kansas City the bagels taste like just round bread?" In other words, she knew the difference between those bagel-shaped objects available in American supermarkets and the authentic New York item that had been hand-rolled and boiled in a vat and then carefully baked by a member in good standing of the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union. My sadness at the evidence that she wasn't actually from my home town was offset by my pride in the evidence that she was precocious.

Would Proust have been ironic about the madeleine, particularly if he had fetched up in a place where you couldn't get a decent madeleine if your life depended on it? When my daughters were children, bagels were not only their staple food but also the food of important rituals. On Sunday mornings, I often took them to Houston Street, on the Lower East Side. At Russ & Daughters, which is what New Yorkers call an appetizer store, we would buy Nova Scotia salmon—a transaction that took some time, since the daughters (of Joel Russ, the founder, who stared down at us from a splendid portrait on the wall) had to quit slicing fish now and then to tell me in glorious detail how adorable my girls were. Then we'd go next door to Ben's Dairy to get cream cheese and a delicacy known as baked farmer's cheese with scallions. Then we were at Tanenbaum's, a bakery that was probably best known for a large, dark loaf often referred to as Russian health bread. We were not there for Russian health bread.

"So you think she's just humoring her old dad?" I asked Alice, when we dis-



I found it difficult to believe that anybody could be ironic about those bagels. They were almost black. Misshapen. Oniony. Abigail adored them.

BEN KATCHOR

"Hey—truce? It looks like I might be fertile!"

• •

cussed the conversation I'd had with Abigail on the way back from Chinatown. "I do."

Alice was probably right. I understood that. Abigail enjoys living in California, and she's got a job there that she loves. Children grow up and lead lives of their own. Parents are supposed to accept that. Still, I decided that I'd look around for those pumpernickel bagels. As my father used to say, "What could it hurt?"

It wasn't my first try. When the pumpernickel bagels disappeared, I immediately made serious inquiries. Without wanting to cast blame, I have to say that the disappearance occurred on Mutke's watch. Mutke's formal name is Hyman Perlmutter. In the early seventies, he bought Tanenbaum's Bakery and transformed it into the downtown branch of a bakery he ran eight or ten blocks away called Moishe's. For some time, Mutke carried Tanenbaum's full inventory. Then one day—I don't remember precisely when, but Abigail and Sarah were still living at home—the pumpernickel bagels were no longer there. Confronted with the facts, Mutke was sanguine. Those particular bagels weren't available anymore, he explained, but, as a special order, he could always provide me with a dozen or two just like them. Eventually, he did. I pulled one out of the bag. It was a smooth bagel, uniformly round. It was the color of cappuccino, heavy on the milk. It was a stranger to onions. It was not by any means Abigail's bagel.

I realize now, of course, that I gave up too easily. Sure, I stopped by to try the pumpernickel anytime I heard of a promising new bagel bakery—even if it was uptown, a part of the city I don't venture to unnecessarily. But I didn't make a systematic search. How was I to know that bagels can be instrumental in keeping families intact? This time, I was going to be thorough. I had read in Molly O'Neill's "New York Cook Book" about a place in Queens where bagels were made in the old-fashioned way. I figured that there must be similar places in Brooklyn neighborhoods with a large population of Orthodox Jews—Williamsburg, maybe, or Borough Park. I was prepared to go to the outer boroughs. But I thought it made sense to start back on Houston Street.

The area where Abigail and Sarah and I used to make our Sunday rounds has seen some changes over the years. The old tenement streets used to seem grim. Now they sport patches of raffish chic. On Orchard Street, around the corner from our Sunday-morning purveyors, stores that have traditionally offered bargains on fabrics and women's clothing and leather goods are punctuated by the sort of clothing store that has a rack of design magazines and a coffee bar and such a spare display of garments that you might think you're in the studio apartment of someone who has bizarre taste in cocktail dresses and no closet to keep them in. These days, the Lower East Side is a late-night destination—both Orchard and Ludlow have bars too hip to require a sign—and a cool place to live. After spending years listening to customers tell him that he ought to move Russ & Daughters uptown, Mark Federman, the son of one of the daughters, is renovating the apartments above the store and expressing gratitude that his grandfather held on to the building.

Ben's Dairy has closed, and Moishe's Bakery has moved to a tiny place around the corner. But Russ & Daughters has been carefully preserved to look pretty much the way it did when the founder himself still had his arms deep in the herring barrel. I figured Mark might have some information I could use, and he was bound to be sympathetic to the project: his daughter, Niki, recently graduated from college and moved to San Francisco. "Do you think Niki might come back, too, if we found the bagels?" I asked, as Mark and I edged ourselves into the tiny office he shares with his wife, Maria.

"I don't think she'd come back for bagels," he said. "Maybe for an apartment upstairs."

Maria shook her head. "I already offered," she said.

Mark said that he knew precisely the bagel I was talking about, but that he had

Continued on page 87

LITTLE FUGUE

at birth you were handed a ticket

beneath every journey the ticket to this
journey in one direction

or say the body

is a conveyor belt, moving in one direction
slower or swifter than sight

at birth

you were handed a ticket, indecipherable
rectangle forgotten in your pocket

or say you stand upon a moving walkway

as if all you fear
is losing your

balance moving in one direction

beneath every journey the ticket to this
journey in one direction

—*Frank Bidart*

no idea where to find it. He phoned his mother, who's retired, in Florida. "Do you remember when Tanenbaum next door used to have this sort of gnarly—" he began, and then started to laugh. "Not an old woman," he said. "I'm asking about bagels." Apparently, his mother remembered the gnarly old woman quite well. Not the bagels.

Although Russ & Daughters carries bagels these days, Mark insisted that he didn't have the expertise to be much help in tracing a particular baker; locating an obscure source of belly lox would have been more his line of country. Still, he made a couple of calls, including one to Mosha's Bread, a wholesale operation in Williamsburg, which has been turning out pumpernickel since the late nineteenth century. (Mosha's Bread, it almost goes without saying, has no connection with Moishe's Bakery.) As I was about to leave Russ's, the boss of Mosha's, who turned out to be a woman named Cecile Erde Farkas, returned Mark's call. Mark introduced himself, and before he could explain my quest he began to sound like someone on the receiving end of a sales pitch. "To tell you the truth, I don't sell much bread," I heard him say, and then, "Here's what I could use—a good babka. I could sell the hell out of a good babka . . . plain, yeah, and chocolate."

There was a message on my answering machine that evening from Mark. He had reached a friend of his named Danny Scheinin, who ran Kossar's, a distinguished purveyor of bialys, for decades before selling out a year or two ago. "Danny says he thinks Tanenbaum got that bagel from somebody named Poznanski," Mark said, when I got back to him. "Also, he says it wasn't a real bagel."

"Not a real bagel!"

"I don't know exactly what he means," Mark said. "Talk to him."

When I reached Scheinin, I found out that what he'd meant was this: In the old days, there was a sharp split between bagel bakeries and bread bakeries. The bagel bakers had their own

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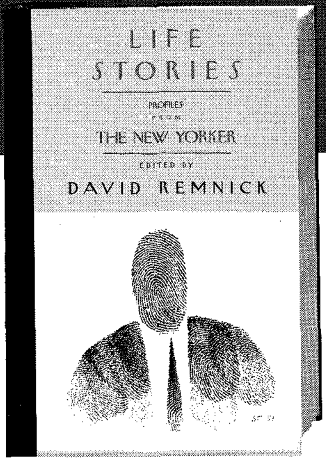

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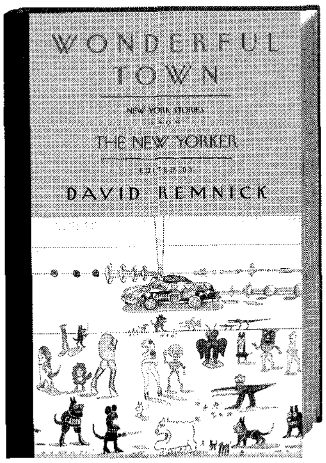

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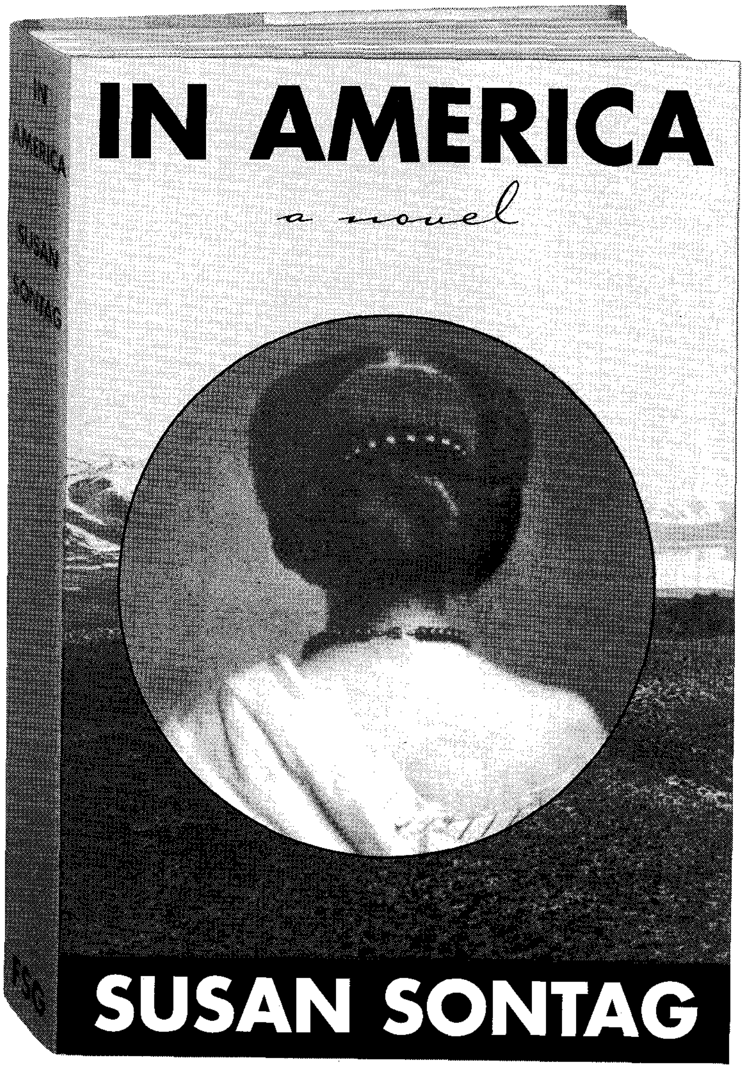

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—Joan Acocella, *The New Yorker*

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

local, No. 338. They didn't bake bread and bread bakers didn't make bagels. Originally, of course, bagels were made only with white flour. But some bread bakers who trafficked in pumpernickel would twist some bread dough into bagel shapes and bake them. By not going through the intermediate boiling that is part of the process of making an authentic bagel, they stayed out of another local's jurisdiction. Scheinin was confident that Abigail's bagel had been made that way for Tanenbaum's by a bread baker named Sam Poznanski, in Williamsburg, who died some years ago. As far as Scheinin knew, the bakery still existed, under the management of Poznanski's wife. He gave me the number. "Tell her Danny from the bialys said to call," he told me.

Mrs. Poznanski, I have to say, did not seem terribly engaged by my quest. The longest answer she gave was when I asked her if Poznanski's had quit making the pumpernickel bagel when her husband died, and she said, "No. Before." Still, she confirmed that the object of Abigail's adoration was from Poznanski's and that it was not boiled. This was hard news to take. It sounded perilously close to saying that the bagel we were searching for was just round bread. But what bread!

The bread/bagel split was confirmed by Herb Bostick, a business agent of Local 3 of the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union, which by now has absorbed No. 338 into a local that mixes bagel bakers and bread bakers and cake bakers together the way someone faced with baking a pie at the last minute might mix in bits of whatever kinds of flour happened to be in the cupboard. What Bostick said was in line with what I'd learned from Cecile Farkas, of Mosha's, with whom I'd arranged a meeting after her babka pitch to Mark. She'd told me that for years her late father offered pumpernickel bagels that were baked without being boiled first. "Then they weren't real bagels?" I'd said.

"If my daddy called them bagels they were bagels," Mrs. Farkas said.

I hadn't had to journey to the outer boroughs to see Cecile Farkas. By chance, she was doing a bread promotion at a store on Twenty-third Street. She turned out to be a chatty woman in her sixties, who told me that she had joined Mosha's only when her father became elderly; she'd been trained as an electrical engineer. That didn't surprise me. Mark Federman had been a lawyer. A family business is no respecter of degrees. Mrs. Farkas told me that her own daughter, having earned her master's in career counselling, plans to launch Mosha's West. Would Mosha's West be a few blocks closer to Manhattan than the original Mosha's? No. Her daughter lives in San Francisco. Cecile Farkas said that, with only a few hours' notice, Mosha's could duplicate the sort of bagel Abigail craves. "It would be my pleasure," she said.

"If that happens and Abigail moves back to New York, you would have done a mitzvah," I said. "It would be written next to your name in the Book of Life."

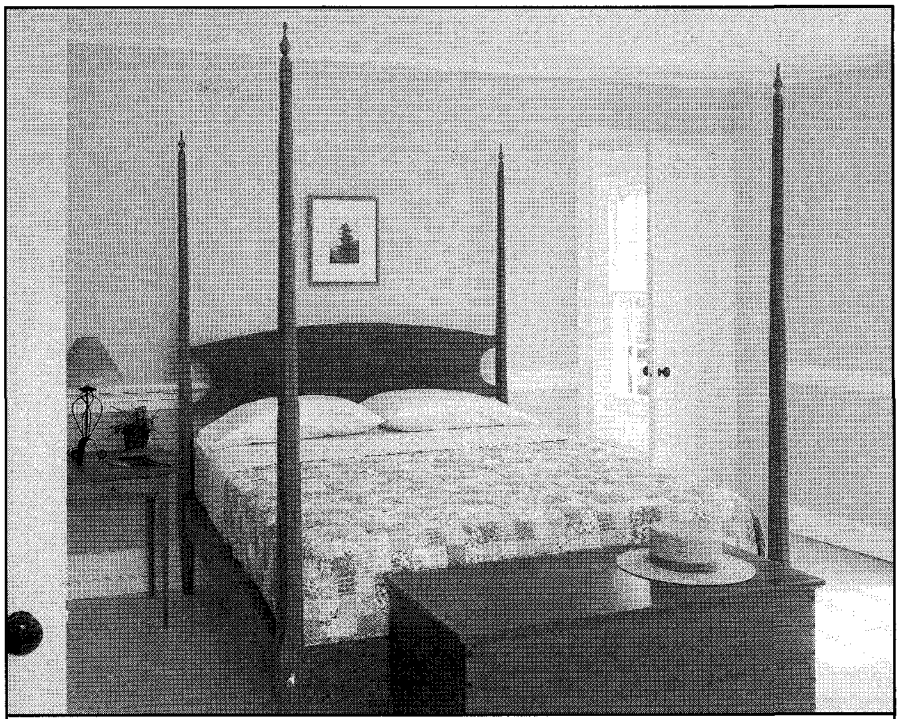
Mrs. Farkas shrugged off any thought of reward. "It would be my pleasure," she repeated. I had recognized her as a person of character the moment she'd told me that whatever her daddy said was a bagel was a bagel.

I tried to present the situation to Alice in an objective way: "I suppose you think that if Mosha's really did succeed in duplicating the bagel and I told Abigail that it was readily available in the neighborhood and I didn't trouble her with the really quite arcane information that it's not, technically speaking, a bagel, I would be acting completely contrary to everything we tried to teach her about honesty and integrity."

"Yes," Alice said.

"I thought you might."

She's right, of course. I know that. Lately, though, it has occurred to me that there were areas I left unexplored in my conversation with Mrs. Poznanski. It's true that she expressed no interest whatsoever in bagels, but what if I got Mark Federman to agree to carry those little pumpernickel numbers—not instead of Mrs. Farkas's babkas, I hasten to say, but in addition to Mrs. Farkas's babkas. Would the Russ & Daughters account be enough to propel Poznanski's back into the bagel business? This is assuming, of course, that Sam Poznanski's recipe still exists. All in all, it's a long shot. Still, I'm thinking of making a trip to Williamsburg. What could hurt? ♦



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PROFILES

THE MAN WHO FORGETS NOTHING

The minestrone of Martin Scorsese's mind.

BY MARK SINGER

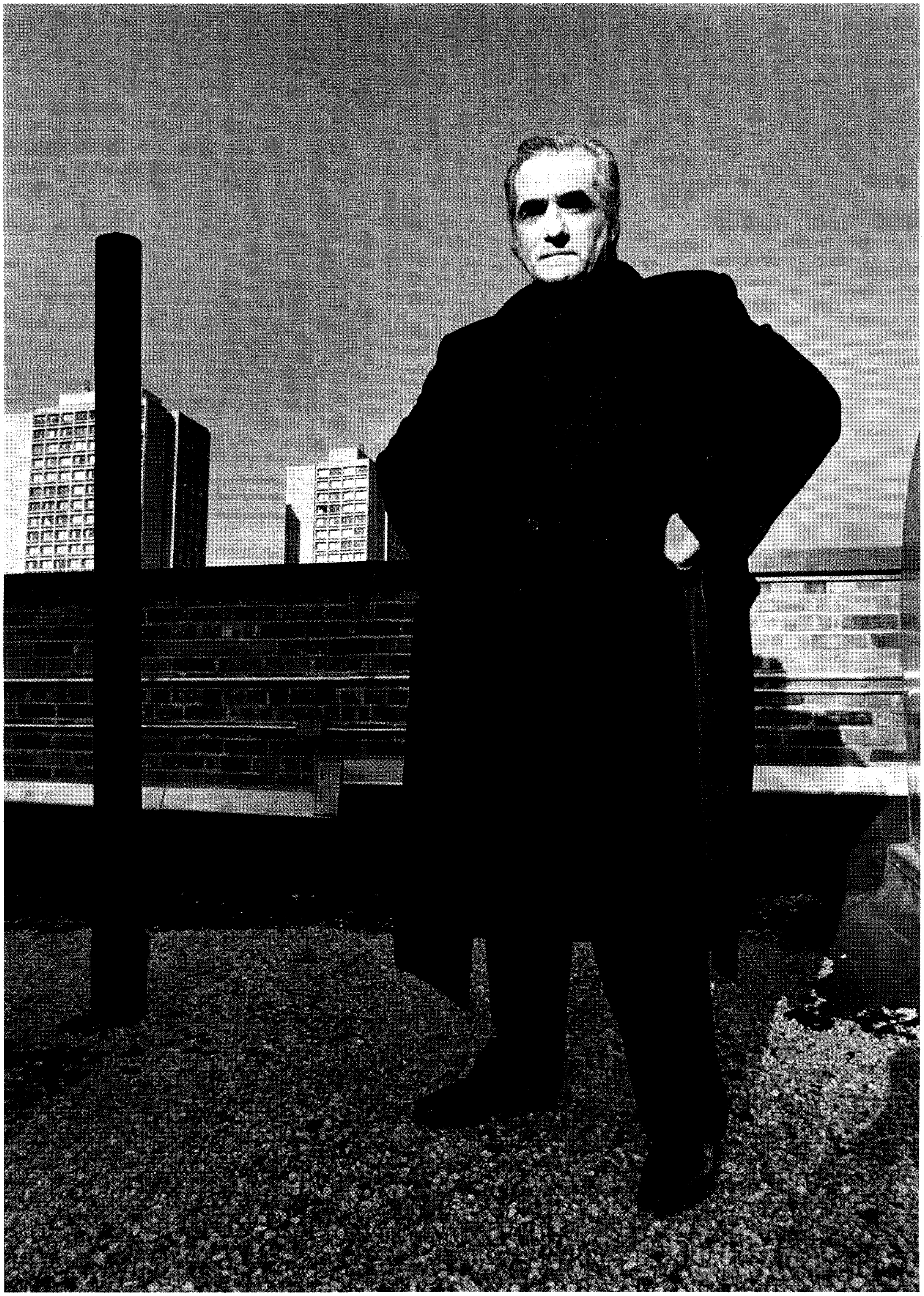
Now, where were we? Oh, right, Martin Scorsese's stream of consciousness. O.K., so one afternoon late last summer, seven weeks shy of the opening date of his most recent film, "Bringing Out the Dead," we happened to be in a sound-mixing studio in the Brill Building, on Broadway, in the Forties. The floor was raked like a theatre's, and Scorsese was situated at a console so that he was literally overseeing a couple of craftsmen—a rerecording mixer and a sound editor—who knew how to operate a control panel with about five hundred knobs and switches. For more than a month, Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker, who has edited each of his films since "Raging Bull," in 1980, had been scrutinizing every millimetre of the film's dialogue, music, and sound effects. A thirty-foot-wide screen spanned one wall, and at the moment it was filled with a medium shot of Nicolas Cage and Tom Sizemore, playing a pair of Emergency Medical Service workers named Frank and Tom. Heard but not seen as their ambulance cruised midtown was Scorsese himself, cast as a sardonic radio dispatcher, delivering dialogue courtesy of Paul Schrader (by way of a novel written by Joe Connelly) in a voice that was unmistakably, quintessentially New York—a quick-tempo wise-guy patois with a don't-tempt-me edge of neurotic potential. He had bad news for Frank and Tom. He was assigning them to pick up a notoriously foul-smelling alcoholic derelict, and to escort him to a hospital: "First of all, I want you to know how sorry I am about this. I've always liked you two. A unit above none. A legend in its own lunchtime. So it hurts me deeply to do this. But I have no choice. You must go to Forty-eighth and Broadway. In front of a liquor store, you'll find a fifty-year-old man unconscious. It says here, 'Man smells real bad.' Do I have to say more?"

It sounded snappy, funny, and fine to me. However, according to a batch of typewritten notes that had been prepared after a work-in-progress screening the previous week at a small theatre on the East Side, Scorsese's voice was perhaps "too piercing."

" 'Too piercing'?" Scorsese now said. "It's one of my best performances. I can hardly hear myself."

As Tom Fleischman, the rerecording mixer, paused the film and got busy modulating the pitch of this speech, Scorsese's thoughts sprinted off in a different direction. He was reminded of the old Harry Belafonte calypso tune "The Banana Boat Song"—or, rather, a parody of same by Stan Freberg, which included a reference to "piercing," and that reminded him of another Freberg routine, a parody of the television series "Dragnet," which in turn reminded him of "Pete Kelly's Blues," a feature film directed by Jack Webb, the star of "Dragnet." The production designer of "Pete Kelly's Blues," in which Webb played a bandleader during the twenties, was a Disney veteran who brought to it a remarkably vivid palette, a reality-heightening Technicolor glow reminiscent of the live-action Disney children's films of the forties—stuff like "So Dear to My Heart" and "Song of the South." And, Scorsese further recalled, "Pete Kelly's Blues" had a screenplay by Richard L. Breen, whose name, curiously, Webb had heralded before the title. When the picture was released, in 1955, the year Scorsese turned thirteen, he followed it from theatre to theatre, as was his habit. He did most of his growing up on the Lower East Side, on Elizabeth Street—a self-contained Sicilian urban village where it was understood that you needed a good reason to venture far from the neighborhood. Going way uptown to see a Jack Webb picture in a first-run theatre wasn't a good enough reason, even for an adolescent movie addict. You waited until it came downtown to one of the second-run chain theatres—the Loew's Commodore, at Sixth Street and Second Avenue, or the Academy of Music, on Fourteenth Street—and the ticket price dropped from a dollar-fifty to seventy-five cents. For second and third viewings, you went to the independently owned Stuyvesant or St. Mark's or Orpheum, all on Second Avenue, where the price was about a quarter. One particular Saturday-afternoon double feature at the Orpheum came to mind: "Bomba the Jungle Boy" and "Great White Hunter." He'd gone hoping to see "something totally mindless," and "Bomba the Jungle Boy" certainly qualified. But "Great White Hunter" turned out to be a rerelease of "The Macomber Affair" (based upon the Hemingway story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"), a whoa-what's-happening-here sexual psychodrama directed by Zoltán Korda and starring Gregory Peck, Joan Bennett, and Robert Preston as the unlucky Macomber. On a Sunday afternoon when the Loew's Commodore was completely packed, Scorsese and his father, Charles, saw Hitchcock's "Rear Window." Afterward, still tingling, they got caught in an intermission crowd on the Second Avenue sidewalk outside the Anderson Theatre, a Yiddish house where Molly Picon's name was on the marquee (not to be confused with the lower-echelon Yiddish theatres on the Bowery, where Charles Scorsese, as an adolescent, used to sneak in and spend the night when he'd got into trouble at home).

I'd brought along a laptop computer, and, though I type very quickly, I was laboring to keep up. Hoping to slow Scorsese's stride, I interjected that while I was growing up in Oklahoma my impressions of New York derived from the TV series "Naked City" and, most memorably, from the movie version of "West Side Story." No doubt the Leonard Bernstein overture helped, but mainly I'd been hooked by the opening image—an abstract graphic representation of the Manhattan skyline that dissolved into the real thing. Yes, absolutely, Scorsese agreed, those graphics



Movies, books, whiskey labels, childhood memories—they're all lodged in the director's brain. Photograph by Helmut Newton.

were the extraordinary handiwork of Saul Bass, who later designed the titles of "GoodFellas," "Casino," "The Age of Innocence," and the four-hour documentary "A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies." And the production designer of "West Side Story" was Boris Leven, who worked on Scorsese's "New York, New York," "The Last Waltz," "The King of Comedy," and "The Color of Money." Not that Leven was necessarily to blame, but he also designed a 1954 stinker called "The Silver Chalice," in which Paul Newman made his screen début, for which Newman later apologized with an advertisement in the Los Angeles *Times*. The performance that really stood out in "The Silver Chalice" was that of Jack Palance as Simon the Magician, "who gave Jesus a run for his money. . . . He was one of the holy men that the quote pagans unquote rallied around as an answer to the Jesus cult. He was said to have raised the dead—twice!—and he disappeared completely while being interrogated by the emperor." That digression led naturally to Apollonius of Tyana, Hannibal, the Punic Wars, the fact that when you go to Tunisia it's mainly Roman rather than Carthaginian ruins that you see, and how that landscape invariably evokes Federico Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria." Scorsese was barely warming up, I gathered, but Fleischman had by then solved the "too piercing" problem, and it was time to move on.

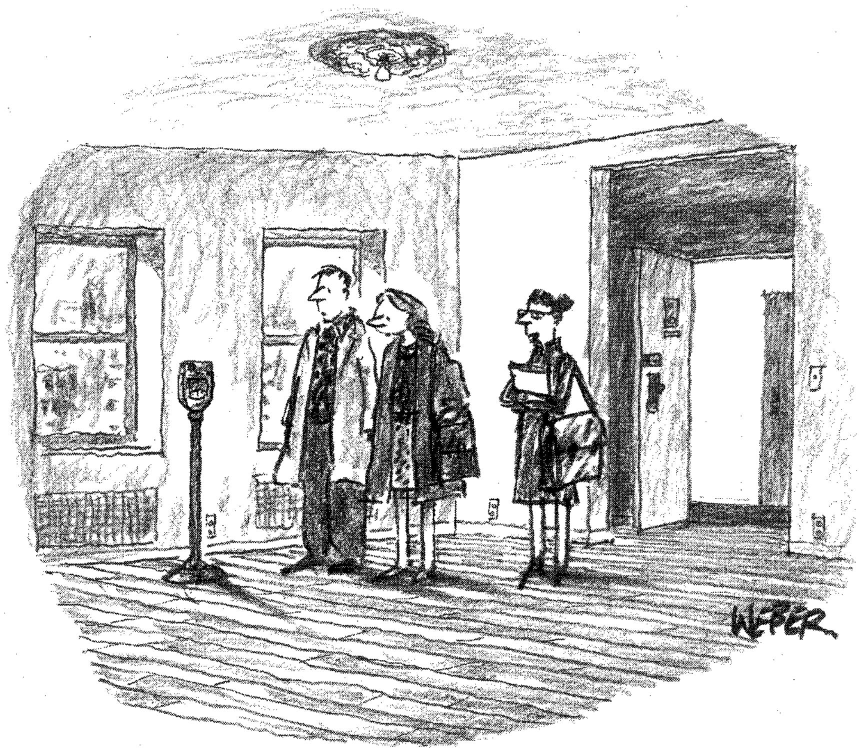
Across many months, I had many conversations with Scorsese, encounters that tended to engender a mixture of awe and sympathy. Along the way, I would speculate about this agreeably garrulous fellow: What's the weather like inside his brain? Evidently, every movie he'd ever watched—and he'd probably seen more than any other living director, more than most movie critics—was stored there, along with five-plus decades of personal history, sensory memory, family mythology, music heard, books read, all of it seemingly instantly retrievable. Was it painful, I wondered, to remember so much? Scorsese's powers of recall weren't limited to summoning plot turns or notable scenes or acting performances; his gray matter bulged with camera angles, lighting strategies, scores, sound effects, ambient noises, editing rhythms, production credits, data about lenses and film stocks and exposure speeds and aspect ratios. Instinctively, he'd engraved facts and images and feelings that he'd been able to draw upon throughout his creative life. But what about all the sludge? An inability to forget the forgettable—wasn't that a burden, or was it just part of the price one paid to make great art?

Since 1973, the year "Mean Streets" appeared—long before the label "America's greatest living film director" became routinely appended to his name—moviegoers throughout the world have known what a Scorsese movie looks and sounds like, even if only from seeing the work of other auteurs, disciples, and wanna-bes who've gone to school on his camera moves, narrative innovations, and editing tropes. Scorsese once mentioned to me that the best new movie he'd seen during the previous year was "Rushmore," an unpredictable and winsome comedy directed by Wes Anderson—who, he learned after sending Anderson a fan letter, was an ardent admirer of Scorsese's exemplar, Michael Powell, the British director of such masterpieces as "The Red Shoes," "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp," and "A Matter of Life and Death." When I asked Anderson how he'd reacted to hearing from Scorsese, he replied, "I wrote back to him probably twenty-five seconds after receiving his letter." Of course, Anderson also proved to be a careful student of Scorsese.

"So many Scorsese ideas have been used so much that they're no longer Scorsese ideas," he told me. "They're just part of the grammar. The most obvious things are the ways he moves the camera and the cuts. And the way he uses music. Also, using documentary-style information in a fiction movie. . . . Take the counting of the money in 'Casino.' The movie just sort of stops for a few minutes, nothing is happening with the characters, because he's telling you how the money works. He does it differently in 'Mean Streets,' when he shows you how that world works. He's not the first director to do these things, but the way he does it combines realism and this dreamy and surreal expressionism."

"Marty hates plots," Thelma Schoonmaker often says, echoing remarks that Scorsese has uttered along those same lines. He is, of course, a masterly storyteller, one who refuses to settle for conventional three-act linear dramas with tidy resolutions, because since when does life work that way? What drives a Scorsese tale is his talent for weaving variegated optical and aural and emotional textures, for devising solutions to the paradox that truth and beauty and depravity must share the same frame. Underlying these dazzling gifts is Scorsese's compulsion to provoke discomfort in himself and his audience. For instance, there's the slaughter at the Norbulinga Palace in "Kundun," or the torment and torture of Jesus in "The Last Temptation of Christ," or the tattooed torso of the jailed Max Cady (Robert De Niro) in "Cape Fear." Or there's that sidewalk confrontation between Travis (De Niro) and Sport (Harvey Keitel, playing Jodie Foster's pimp) in "Taxi Driver," during which De Niro expresses his revulsion—and our revulsion—by stiffening his spine and looking away, into the uncertain distance. Our sympathy lies squarely with Travis at that moment, as opposed to the chill we feel in the famous "You talkin' to me?" sequence. (For my money, and this is, I concede, a minority viewpoint, the most unnerving scene in the Scorsese canon is the passage in "The King of Comedy" where Rupert Pupkin, in a successful effort by De Niro to establish a gold standard for putzlike behavior, shows up uninvited, luggage in hand, along with a girl he's trying to impress—Diahnne Abbott—at the weekend home of Jerry Langford, a Carson-like talk-show host played by Jerry Lewis. Pure skin-crawling terror, and nobody ever comes close to getting hurt.)

Barbara Hershey, who played Mary Magdalene in "Last Temptation," spoke to Mary Pat Kelly, one of Scorsese's many biographers, about the disturbing scene in which she copulates with a series of strangers while Jesus watches silently: "There was one shot, just a simple shot, where an Indian man is watching me make love. Christ is sitting out of focus in the background. . . . The camera slowly starts to move in, and you think it's going to move onto Christ, but it swoops slightly and moves into the



"It's a new rent concept—fifteen minutes for a quarter."

• •

close-up of the eye of the Indian man, and then it locks focus and Christ is in focus as well, in the background. When I saw it I said to Marty, 'How did you think of that?' and he said, 'I thought of that four years ago. I woke up in the middle of the night with that one.' I realized that he had been preparing for this film his whole life. . . . Who knows what talent is? . . . I don't think talent is as rare as the need to express it or the strength to handle the rejection. I don't think Marty can help it; there's nothing else he can do with his life."

That combination of sensibility and urgency—the encyclopedic brain brimming with references to old movies and real-life experiences, waiting for just the right opportunity to download—is the dominant trait that distinguishes Scorsese from other filmmakers of his generation. In "Wiseguy," the nonfiction bestseller by Nicholas Pileggi that "GoodFellas" was based upon, the wife of the main character, a Mafia soldier named Henry Hill, described how during their courtship he would escort her to the Copacabana night club: "On crowded nights, when people were lined up outside and couldn't get in, the doormen used to let Henry and our party in through the kitchen, which was filled with Chinese cooks, and we'd go upstairs and sit down immediately." Somehow, Scorsese translated those forty words into a seamless three-minute Steadicam shot, an exhilarating and revelatory blend of cinéma vérité and ballet—choreographed to the perfect music, "Then He Kissed Me," by the Crystals. When the camera at last delivers us to the big room at the Copa, Henry Hill (Ray Liotta), whom we've seen crossing palms with twenty-dollar bills, and his future wife (Lorraine Bracco) momentarily disappear, and a pair of briskly efficient waiters hoisting a linen-draped table enter the frame to give the couple the V.I.P. treatment. Offscreen, some poor schmucks waiting to be seated whine futilely to the maître d'.

How was it that Scorsese knew to build that scene that way? Or, rather, how was it that Pileggi's book found its way into the hands of the only film director alive who just happened to know by heart, along with a zillion other potentially but not necessarily useless facts, the protocols of the Copacabana in the fifties? "I'd been there a lot when I was fifteen or sixteen," Scorsese told me. "And I saw this go on all the time. I had to explain it all to the crew. 'Make sure we see the money. Money, money, money, money. Slipping money here and there, slipping money here and there, slipping money. Even if you don't see the cash, you see the hand movements.' Henry's greasing his way all the way in. This guy's like a king. This is his reward. The Copacabana was like, I don't know, like Buckingham Palace, especially if somebody like Sinatra was performing. It was as sanctified in my world, where I came from, before making movies, as you could get. Especially when you're younger, you get down there and you think you've got a great table and suddenly three more tables come flying into the room and these wise guys, all these gangsters, come in and you can't say anything. You're finished."

"Marty never talks about his art," Pileggi has said. "All he ever wants to know from me is 'What really happened? What was he really talking about? How was he dressed? Where were they standing? What did his wife say?' "

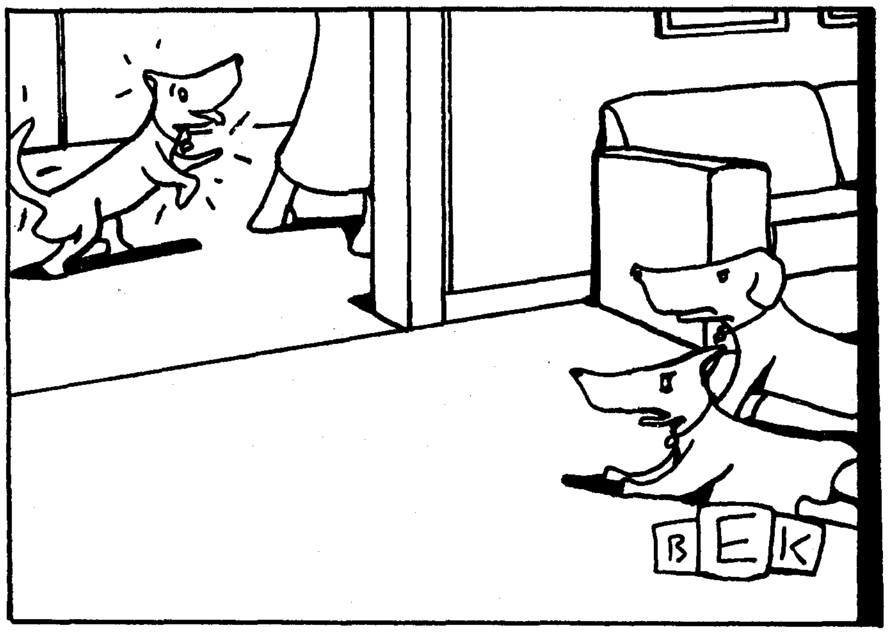
Marty hates plots? It's a reductive, not-to-be-taken-too-literally way of saying that Scorsese is, among other things, a cultural anthropologist (with an unscientific devotion to the notion that character is destiny). Reviewing "Mean Streets," Pauline Kael, in an unalloyed rave, described it as "a true original of our period, a triumph of personal filmmaking" and observed that "every character, every sound is rooted in those streets." In contexts as diverse as Las Vegas ("Casino"), Tibet ("Kundun"), Edith Wharton's New York ("The Age of Innocence"), and the Mob's outer boroughs ("GoodFellas"), Scorsese anatomizes the codes and rituals of whatever subculture he fixes his lens upon. He's an articulate, generous explainer, and his elucidations of what he was thinking when he first imagined that shot or made that cut reveal a rigorous self-awareness and a mind that's at once phenomenally cluttered and coherent. All that shelf space inside his cranium, it seems, is jammed with subtext—the footnotes, in effect, of his inspirations, footnotes that, as often as not, prove no less edifying or entertaining than the main text.

No longer young, not yet old, Scorsese is, at fifty-seven, contentedly married (to his fifth wife) and the father of an infant daughter (as well as two grown daughters). According to Raffaele Donato, a film historian who has worked for Scorsese for fifteen years and along the way has become a close confidante, "Fellini used to tell Marty, 'As you get older, you're getting as handsome as De Sica.' " Well, not quite Vittorio De Sica, who had wavy silver hair and a dolce-vita radiance, but handsome, yes, in a worldly way: wide jaw, easy smile, bony nose, espresso eyes, and thick dark eyebrows hoisted like a furled awning, as if to say, "Behind these frontal lobes, everything is open for business." Each morning, he puts in a half hour on an exercise bicycle, a regimen that helps maintain his trim, bantam-rooster physique. But he has a history of shaky health, and he's heedful of the physical demands of filmmaking, the weeks in a row of twelve-hour shooting days followed by months of nocturnal postproduction marathons. He keeps a supply of inhalers handy for the asthma that has shadowed him since childhood, an affliction that, in retrospect, had a distinct upside; he couldn't run around with the other kids, but by studying street life from the living-room window he educated himself in the nuances of body language. Plus, his parents felt guilty that he was a shut-in, so they took him to see a *lot* of movies.

He now lives far from the Elizabeth Street tenement, on the East Side, in a brownstone he bought in 1987; he works there and in a suite of offices occupying half a floor in a midtown building. Door to door, it would be about a ten-minute walk, except that Scorsese's natural gregariousness makes it hard for him to tell intrusive strangers to back off, so he gets around town with a car and driver. He has no listed phone number, nor does his production company, Cappa Films. ("We find that people who really want to get in touch figure out a way.")

At this point in his life, Scorsese says, unless he's grappling with a movie budget he almost never thinks about money, as opposed to the eighties, "when I thought about it a lot, because I had none." A business manager advises as to what he can and can't afford. An avid book collector (recently, of first editions of novels that have been adapted as movies, as well as of Melville, Hawthorne, Joyce, Greene, and Huxley, among others), he began thirty years ago compiling an enormous collection of old movie posters, most of which are stored at the Museum of Modern Art. He doesn't have an agent, as such, but when situations arise that call for someone to represent his interests in a forceful manner—typically, dealing with certain people at certain movie studios—he often relies upon the Hollywood potentate and testicle squeezer Michael Ovitz. This arrangement dates to 1987, when Scorsese was despairing that he'd never be able to find a studio to back "The Last Temptation of Christ," a story he believed he'd been put on earth to bring to the screen. Four years earlier, Paramount Pictures had pulled the plug just as production was about to get under way. A come-on Ovitz used in the wooing was "You know, Marty, you could get paid for being a film director." (Though not, as it turned out, for "Last Temptation" itself, which, financed by Universal, had a bare-bones budget of seven million dollars, a cast of splendid actors virtually all of whom worked for scale, and a director so fervid he agreed to work for nothing.)

Ovitz tapped into Scorsese's deepest dread: that a day will arrive when he'll no longer be able to make movies. He understands the marginal nature of his Hollywood citizenship—the category reserved for those whose work is revered but rarely does boffo box-office. (No doubt, it's harder for him to account for the bizarre fact that, despite five Academy Award nominations, he has never won.) In 1990, Scorsese showed Brian De Palma, an old friend, a rough cut of "GoodFellas," and De Palma reacted with mock outrage: "You made the best movie of the eighties"—"Raging Bull"—"and, God damn it, we're barely into the nineties and you've already made the best movie of this decade, too!" De Palma might have added that "Mean Streets" and "Taxi Driver" ranked among the best movies of the seventies, the decade when Hollywood reinvented itself. No wonder that in recent years Scorsese has received several awards of the lifetime-achievement variety, usually bestowed during black-tie ceremonies that test his ability not to squirm as moist-eyed colleagues deliver heartfelt testimonials. (Steven Spielberg: "Marty is the most honest filmmaker of our generation and in my opinion he is the best director in the world today"; etc.) Guided by a blend of pragmatism and Sicilian fatalism, Scorsese regards such tributes warily, as if they were a warning that gray eminence lurks around the corner. He knows how abruptly even the most original talents can discover that their services are no longer in demand. Despite Scorsese's championing of his still-vibrant genius, Michael Powell couldn't really get work toward the end of his life. Fellini faced comparable circumstances, and Scorsese intervened on his behalf, as well. (Of Powell's "Peeping Tom" and Fellini's "8½," Scorsese has declared that they "say everything that can be said about film-making, about



"I hate it when he gets all Robin Williamsy."

SARABANDE ON ATTAINING THE AGE OF SEVENTY-SEVEN

The harbingers are come. See, see their mark;
White is their colour, and behold my head.
—George Herbert

Long gone the smoke-and-pepper childhood smell
Of the smoldering immolation of the year,
Leaf-strewn in scattered grandeur where it fell,
Golden and poxed with frost, tarnished and sere.

And I myself have whitened in the weathers
Of heaped-up Januaries as they bequeath
The annual rings and wrongs that wring my withers,
Sober my thoughts, and undermine my teeth.

The dramatis personae of our lives
Dwindle and wizen; familiar boyhood shames,
The tribulations one somehow survives,
Rise smokily from propitiatory flames

Of our forgetfulness until we find
It becomes strangely easy to forgive
Even ourselves with this clouding of the mind,
This cinerous blur and smudge in which we live.

A turn, a glide, a quarter turn and bow,
The stately dance advances; these are airs
Bone-deep and numbing as I should know by now,
Diminishing the cast, like musical chairs.

—Anthony Hecht

the process of dealing with film, the objectivity and subjectivity of it, and the confusion between the two.")

Scorsese's worshipful respect for his forebears is, in a sense, indiscriminate, extending to the institution of cinema itself. In the early seventies, he attended a screening at the Los Angeles County Museum of Billy Wilder's 1955 comedy "The Seven Year Itch" and was appalled by the quality of the print, the color of which was so faded that everything looked pink. This wasn't an isolated case, he knew, and it led to a daunting, but ultimately successful, campaign to force Eastman Kodak, the leading manufacturer of color-film stock, to develop and bring to the market an affordable, durable product. Then, in 1990, Scorsese enlisted Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas, Sydney Pollack, Robert Redford, and Steven Spielberg, and created the Film Foundation, the goal of which was to heighten awareness of motion-picture history and, specifically, to encourage the restoration and preservation of millions of feet of endangered films which mainly resided in the not very well protected archives of the studios. Scorsese had already helped pay for the restorations of certain favorite movies—André de Toth's "Ramrod," Raoul Walsh's "Pursued," Abraham Polonsky's "Force of Evil"—and he continues to do so. The Film Foundation shares office space with Cappa Films, and preservation advocacy and artists'-rights advocacy have evolved as a parallel enterprise to his work as a filmmaker.

What does it mean that Scorsese possesses this immense and astonishingly accessible knowledge of cinema? To the typical eight-dollar-ticket buyer on a Friday night, probably not much. And it makes understandable why one of his most interesting works—"A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies," a brilliantly condensed and ingeniously autobiographical film-history survey that he undertook, in 1994, at the request of the British Film Institute—didn't turn up in many neighborhood theatres. Film history à la Scorsese began in 1946, when at age four he was taken by his mother to see "Duel in the Sun," a King Vidor Western that starred Jennifer Jones and a villainous Gregory Peck. He was mesmerized: "The bright blasts of deliriously vibrant color, the gunshots, the savage intensity of the music, the burning sun, the overt sexuality . . . the hallucinatory quality of the imagery has never weakened for me over the years." Scorsese's pedagogy in "A Personal Journey," propelled by enthusiasm rather than by dogmatism, pays homage to a handful of relatively obscure filmmakers—Samuel Fuller, Anthony Mann, Jacques Tourneur—and barely touches upon or omits many celebrated works by celebrated directors (Hitchcock, Huston, Wyler). Facing the camera, he makes plain his mission: "I've chosen to highlight some of the films that colored my dreams, that changed my perceptions, and in some cases even my life."

Typical is his discussion of Elia Kazan's "America America," the story of Kazan's uncles' journey from Turkey to America, a classic immigrant experience: "I later saw myself making the same journey . . . from my own neighborhood in New York, which was in a sense a very foreign land. My journey took me from that land to moviemaking—which was something unimaginable! In fact, when I was a little younger, there was another journey I wanted to make: a religious one. I wanted to be a priest. However, I soon realized that my real vocation, my real calling, was the movies. I don't really see a conflict between the church and the movies, the sacred and the profane. . . . I believe there is a spirituality in films, even if it's not one which can supplant faith. I find that over the years many films address themselves to the spiritual side of man's nature, from Griffiths's 'Intolerance' to John Ford's 'The Grapes of Wrath' to Hitchcock's 'Vertigo' to Kubrick's '2001' . . . and so many more. It's as if movies answer an ancient quest for the common unconscious. They fulfill a spiritual need that people have to share a common memory."

Just in time for the Venice Film Festival, late last summer, Scorsese assembled a rough-cut version of the first two hours of "Il Dolce Cinema," a treatise on Italian film that will have grown to six hours by the time it's completed, later this year. Though "Il Dolce Cinema" seems a logical sequel to "A Personal Journey," its conception actually predated the American documentary. For nearly a decade, "Il Dolce Cinema" percolated in conversations between Scorsese and Raffaele Donato, who in 1985 left the film department of the Museum of Modern Art to work as Scorsese's archivist. Donato has described it as "an even more personal journey than 'A Personal Journey' "—an assessment Scorsese shares.

The genesis of "Il Dolce Cinema" can be traced to a brief trip to Sicily that Scorsese made, somewhat reluctantly, in the late seventies, in the company of Isabella Rossellini, who would later become his third wife. They'd been vacationing in Rome when Rossellini proposed a two-day detour to Palermo and the exurban villages of Polizzi Generosa and Ciminna—respectively, Scorsese's father's and mother's ancestral home towns. From Palermo, he phoned his mother, Catherine, in New York, and she gave him the name of a relative to look up. Arriving in Ciminna on a summer Sunday afternoon, Scorsese and Rossellini approached some men gathered in a small plaza, mentioned the person they were looking for, and were greeted with stony indifference. They continued strolling through town, Scorsese told me, asking the same question and making no progress. "Finally, a young man walked up to us and said, 'You want to meet this person, come with me.' He took us to a house where there was a woman with a child. She came out and said her husband was away on business. So I said we were cousins, I was a filmmaker, and I was interested in meeting him. The problem was my mother had given me the name of someone who was in hiding. I guess his wife thought I was the police or the member of a rival gang. Basically, we'd shown up, a couple of strangers, and dropped the worst possible name. That's why we were received that way, just like you see in the movies."

And, just like in the movies, clearing up the misunderstanding involved comic convolutions worthy of Pirandello. A brother of the fugitive cousin heard what had happened and ascertained that a famous American relation had been treated with great disrespect, which led to a falling out between the brothers, which naturally became the talk of Ciminna. An elaborate letter of apology was written—the situation demanded nothing less—but . . . how was one to dispatch the letter? Years passed. Whenever American visitors came to Ciminna, they would be asked, "Where do you live?" If the answer was New York, they were then asked, "Manhattan?" If the answer was "Manhattan," the next question was "Uptown or downtown?" Did they know Elizabeth Street? Did they know Charles and Catherine Scorsese, the parents of Martin? Finally, a woman materialized who indeed knew Elizabeth Street and Charles Scorsese, only he'd moved. But, she said, "I know where he goes to take a shave." Good. She was given the letter. Back in New York, she left a message at the barbershop and wound up hand-delivering the letter and reading it aloud in the Scorseses' kitchen.

By now, the letter was almost ten years old, but its invitation to come to Ciminna for a family reunion still stood. Which is how two years later, in 1990, Charles and Catherine went to Sicily—their first visit—where they were joined by their son the filmmaker. Donato also came along. (In the intervening years, Scorsese's marriage to Isabella Rossellini had come and gone, as had his fourth marriage, to Barbara De Fina, who began producing his movies when he was directing "The Color of Money" and, post-divorce, has continued to produce them.) In Sicily, Scorsese and Donato did what they always do—talked about movies, especially Italian movies, discussions that, according to Scorsese, "would go on for hours, about how certain films depicted the ways of life, the philosophy of the people." Scorsese's return to Ciminna, where, as it happens, Luchino Visconti shot "Il Gattopardo" ("The Leopard")—based upon Giu-

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EASEL BY MICHAEL WITTE

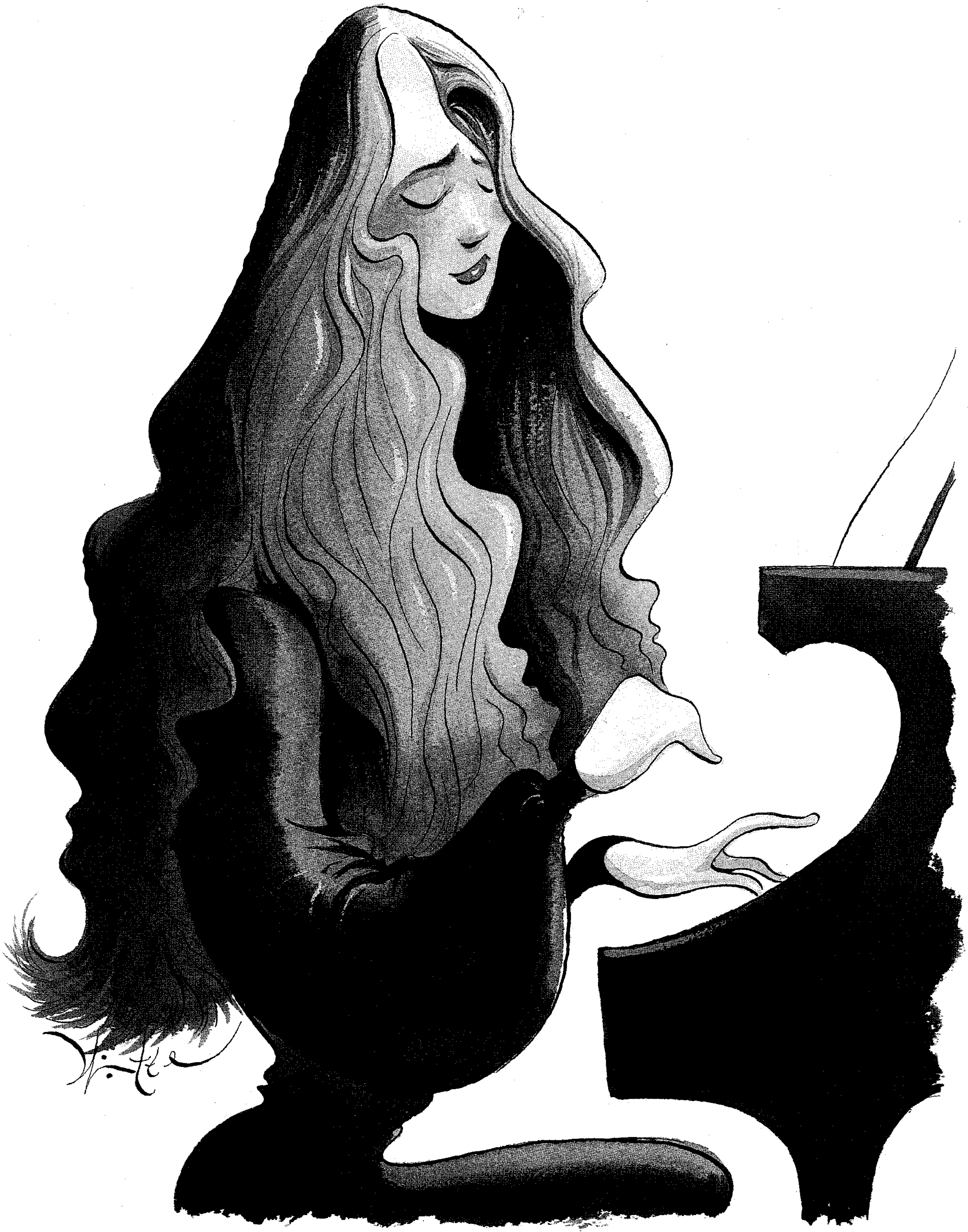
DEVASTATING GRACE

When the pianist Martha Argerich plays Carnegie Hall—as she did last week, with the Philadelphia Orchestra—she causes scenes that Heinrich Heine, who chronicled Lisztomania in the eighteen-forties, would have enjoyed describing. Standing ovations are fairly routine these days, but the applause for Argerich is of a different order: it engulfs the hall like shock waves from a seismic event.

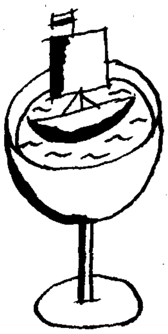
Argerich, a gothic figure with long black hair, is a heroic talent in a post-heroic age. Born in Buenos Aires in 1941, she acquired legendary status in her teens. She could play anything, and she mastered the most formidable challenges with a kind of mystical grace. For a time, she kept up a hectic performance schedule, then retreated in disgust from the flashier districts of the music business. In the eighties, she ceased giving solo recitals, saying that she felt less lonely when she was onstage with colleagues. Now she has returned to the solo spotlight to raise money for the John Wayne Cancer Institute, in Santa Monica, where she has been treated for cancer.

On March 25th, at Carnegie, she makes her first solo appearance in New York since 1981. She will play Bach, Chopin, and Prokofiev by herself; Schumann with the Juilliard Quartet; and Ravel with the Brazilian pianist Nelson Freire. Although she is famous for her lightning strikes on the Romantic repertory, she is a Bach player of devastating elegance. Her most memorable moments are often the quietest ones, when she summons a world of mystery with a faint constellation of notes. Argerich concerts have an occult aura: music charges the air and crackles all around.

—Alex Ross



seppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's exquisite tale of life among the Sicilian aristocracy during Garibaldi's campaign for Italian unification—had an especially stirring effect.



Scorsese: "I think one of the reasons I hadn't been eager to go when Isabella suggested it in 1978 was because I wasn't yet ready to accept that part of myself. The cultural connection between Sicily and where I grew up—whatever's been translated into Sicilian-American—has something very severe and strong about it, especially on my father's side. He wasn't a despot, but he had certain thoughts about what was right and wrong, a morality, based on that land. I knew that when I saw 'The Leopard' in its first release, in 1963. These movies weren't just movies; they were all about the filmmakers and what they had to say, their art form, their version of cinema, their music. You know the funeral music in 'Divorce Italian Style'? We grew up hearing that in the street on the Lower East Side. That was so much a part of me, and one way it stayed with me was that for years my American side was fighting with my Sicilian side. I guess I didn't want to go to Sicily that first time because I felt if I stayed there too long I'd wind up in front of one of those cafés on Sundays drinking coffee, dressed in black, and I'd never make another film. The feeling that I belonged was so primal it was a little unsettling."

Donato: "Every movie that Marty's made, that he's talked about, that he loves, that's impressed in his mind, has some early family association for him. Movies for him aren't abstract, cold, critical, objective things. They're the air you breathe, what you eat. I like the metaphor from the Catholic Mass—Mary Pat Kelly also talks about this—the idea of transubstantiation, the wafer and the wine, body and blood. I think cinema for Marty is like that. When he discusses a film, it has a way of turning into flesh and blood."

With almost evangelical earnestness, Scorsese expresses his desire to introduce "classical Italian cinema"—De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Pietro Germi, Francesco Rosi, Pier Paolo Pasolini, among others—to audiences unfamiliar with their work. His own familiarity with Italian cinema dates back half a century to weekend broadcasts by a New York television station of fare that wouldn't have had much of an audience in, say, Omaha—"Paisan," "Open City," "The Bicycle Thief," "Shoeshine." The impact of specific images was enhanced by the context in which Scorsese absorbed them—the Elizabeth Street living room, where he and his brother, Frank, their parents, maternal grandparents, and uncles communed with a sixteen-inch RCA Victor television. On the other side of the living-room wall was the eight-by-twelve bedroom he shared with Frank, who was seven years older. When the plaster wall cracked next to where Marty slept, in the bottom half of a bunk bed, he covered it up by painting a face with penetrating eyes, then spooked his parents by explaining that the eyes watched him while he slept. "The eyes were sort of magical to me, what they saw," he told me. "The idea would be: viewing, always viewing, always seeing, your eyes being on everything."

Scorsese arrived in Venice burdened by jet lag, fatigue, and general stress. He and Thelma Schoonmaker had endured a string of seven-day workweeks, alternating between the editing of "Il Dolce Cinema" and the postproduction polishing of "Bringing Out the Dead." Simultaneously, he and his frequent writing partner, Jay Cocks, were working on what was supposed to be the final draft of the screenplay of his next feature, "Gangs of New York," an adaptation of Herbert Asbury's history of an unheavenly nineteenth-century city plagued by corruption, poverty, crime, and savage tribal warfare. What else? Oh, yes, his wife, Helen Morris, was confined to bed all but one day a week—the safest place to be for a fifty-two-year-old woman with Parkinson's disease entering the last trimester of pregnancy. The first night in Venice, despite his comfortable accommodations at the Hotel Cipriani, Scorsese dreamed he was being stretched in several directions. Earlier that week, in New York, he'd had a dream that plunged him back into final exams at the Catholic seminary he attended for a year during high school. ("Yes, we know you aren't going to become a priest, but you still have to take the tests.") The night after that, he'd found himself caught up in an epic battle between Gypsies and Sicilians, and the Sicilians were losing. Nightmare-wise, he was on a roll.

The Scorsese entourage included Donato, Schoonmaker, his producer and ex-wife Barbara De Fina, his personal assistant Gretchen Campbell, his media handler Lois Smith, and some devilish-looking professional muscle, a couple of night-club bouncers from Rimini, who wore matching black pin-striped suits and Oakley shades and answered to the same name, Francesco. The screening of "Il Dolce Cinema," or at least the first two hours of it, would be the crowning event of the festival, following the awards ceremony and Scorsese's presentation to Jerry Lewis of a Golden Lion statuette for career achievement (an honor he'd received himself, in 1995). That evening, Scorsese wore a black suit, white shirt, gray striped necktie, and, on his left lapel, a tiny red bar that signified his elevation to the French Legion of Honor (something else he had in common with Jerry Lewis). During the ride from the Cipriani to the festival site, on the Lido, the mood aboard Scorsese's water taxi was subdued, inclining toward lugubrious. As we were about to dock, De Fina mused, "Well, is this the most cheerful group of people in Venice, or what?"

"It's always tense before you go over the top," Scorsese said, gritting his teeth and for all I knew quoting from "All Quiet on the Western Front" or "From Here to Eternity."

"What could go wrong?" I asked.

"The kudos or the bomb," he said. "You never know. And you only learn that by thinking you know."

In this instance, it was definitely kudos. Scorsese sat in the balcony, flanked by Giorgio Armani, who was the film's executive producer (his reward for contributing two hundred thousand dollars of its initial financing), and by the screenwriter Suso Checchi D'Amico. From my vantage point a couple of rows away, I didn't see Scorsese budge during the screening, but he might well have been muttering. Nick Pileggi recalls sitting next to him during the première of "GoodFellas," at the Ziegfeld Theatre, in Manhattan: "As we're watching, I'm getting these elbows. He's saying, 'See? We let that shot run a little too long.' And 'Look at that, we should have taken that out.' I say, 'Marty, it's too late now. We're at the opening. You're wearing a tuxedo.' "

As the credits for "Il Dolce Cinema" rolled, the entire audience rose and faced the balcony, applauding warmly. This was followed by lots of kisses and hugs, including a full body wrap from a tiny, wizened, gray-haired woman who was weeping and speaking in Italian, with Armani translating. Armani hosted a dinner that evening at a restaurant near St. Mark's Square, and on our way through the square I asked Donato who she was. Her name was Marcella De Marchis, and she was Roberto Rossellini's first wife—actually, the only woman he ever married and therefore his widow (and, if you defined the term broadly, sort of one of Scorsese's former in-laws). What had she been saying?

"She described the emotions she was reliving as she watched the clips from 'Paisan' and 'Open City,' " Donato said. "She'd never seen anything on Rossellini done in such a simple way, with such great taste, where you could explain what he was trying to do and capture what he was all about. And she was responding to the fact that this was, on Marty's part, obviously a labor of love."

I wondered if "labor of love" meant that Scorsese wasn't taking any compensation.

"As far as I know," Donato said, "it's a pure labor of love."

Had "A Personal Journey" also been pro bono?

"Well, that one was a little different. For that one, Marty didn't want any money, but as payment he asked the British Film Institute for a copy of 'A Kid for Two Farthings,' a 1955 picture by Carol Reed, who also directed 'The Third Man.' And they promised it to him, but there have been some problems with the restoration. They've never been able to pull all the elements together. So, now that I think of it, he's never actually collected."

A few days after returning from Venice, Scorsese informed me, "What we're going to do is give ourselves a little film festival, which really gets the energy going." He still had to figure out the shape and content of the final four hours of "Il Dolce Cinema," and the most expeditious approach was to watch a bunch of Italian movies that he'd seen many times but nevertheless felt he needed—and, remarkably, was able—to look at with a fresh eye. So, over the next few weeks, I spent several afternoons at the Cappa offices, inside a cozy, gold-carpeted screening room equipped with twelve cushiony green armchairs. Some of the films came from a collection Scorsese oversees—a few thousand sixteen-millimetre and thirty-five-millimetre prints, which he stores at the Museum of Modern Art and at Eastman House, in Rochester, New York. (These are separate from his video collection, which at last count included roughly twenty-five thousand titles.) We saw Pietro Germi's "Divorce Italian Style," Ermanno Olmi's "Il Posto" and "The Fiancés," Luchino Visconti's "La Terra Trema," Michelangelo Antonioni's "Blow-Up," and Francesco Rosi's "Salvatore Giuliano." Thelma Schoonmaker was always present, usually joined by Jay Cocks and his wife, the actress Verna Bloom, and occasionally by Raffaele Donato and Kent Jones, a programmer for the Film Society of Lincoln Center and a co-writer of "Il Dolce Cinema." Afterward, Scorsese and Schoonmaker would consider which clips they might include in the documentary, and he and Cocks, who for nine years reviewed movies for *Time* and for almost thirty years has watched a movie or two a week with Scorsese, would exuberantly analyze the ingredients, as if deconstructing a savory meal.

It became clear to me that Italian cinema matters to Scorsese as something far more than intellectual fodder. He was

"Nothing against Rudy. I just feel that a woman would be instinctively better on dairy issues."

explicit about which passages in which films corresponded to specific motifs in his own work—a sorting out, it seemed, or a way of illuminating his understanding of who he is. A shot of empty coat hangers in an empty room at the end of “Il Posto” inspired a shot of a forlornly dangling light bulb in the final scene of “Raging Bull”: “That just stuck in my mind as a symbol of loneliness. In ‘Raging Bull,’ Jake La Motta is back, ready to go into the ring, only it’s a stage. He’s readjusted his life. He’s made peace with himself and the people around him, but he’s alone. And those images—when you’re sitting alone in a room, you see those little details. If I’m alone here, my eye catches the wall socket under the wainscoting there. The inanimate object makes you aware of your own loneliness, of being by yourself.”

Of the cinematography of “Salvatore Giuliano,” he said, “I think we translated that black-and-white intensity into the color of the neon in the streets of New York at night in ‘Taxi Driver.’ It has a truth and honesty to it that’s really devastating. It deals with humanity on a primal level. In ‘Taxi Driver,’ the way Travis looked, the way he glanced up and down the street, comes from some of this. ‘Salvatore Giuliano’ was an inspiration for that, and to a certain extent for ‘GoodFellas.’ And certainly we looked at it again for ‘Raging Bull,’ just for the black-and-white.”

Scorsese invited me to at least one screening that I suppose he wished he hadn’t. One afternoon less than a month before the première of “Bringing Out the Dead,” he and Schoonmaker settled into the back row of a multiplex theatre in the Viacom Building, at Forty-fifth and Broadway, to inspect a print of the film which had just been put through a process called skip-bleaching, the purpose of which was to subtly heighten the contrast between light and dark tones. As the film played, Scorsese’s own tone sounded anything but lighthearted. The basic flaw, he felt, was that now there was too much contrast. Throughout the screening, I could hear him moaning, “Oh, my God, Thelma. No good. . . . There’s like a haze over the picture. It’s an over-all problem. . . . Oy. No good.” He sounded like an alarmed mother—oddly, like a stereotypical Jewish mother—whose child had just wandered in after a nasty bicycle spill.

“I gotta tell you, the picture’s subject matter is depressing. The areas we shot in the city are down,” he told Schoonmaker afterward. “Each frame looks quite beautiful, but cumulatively, I think emotionally, we’re cut off from the picture, and it’s more depressing than it should be.”

The problem could be fixed, but a cleaned-up print might not be ready in time for a preview two days later.

“Who’s coming to that screening?” I asked.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he said. “Who knows? It’s open to the world now. Everybody’s there—families, ushers, we’re dragging people off the streets, who cares at this point. Everybody’s gonna see it now. That’s the end. It’s all over. It’s gonna go out to theatres and get reviewed. I can’t take it. Oh, God. Oy. That’s it. It’s going out into theatres. Some people may actually come to see it. Oh, God.”

I was reminded of an anecdote about the editing of “Raging Bull” (for which Schoonmaker won an Oscar). As the film’s opening date became imminent, the people around Scorsese recognized that he was having difficulty letting go. Finally, the producer, Irwin Winkler, invoked a deadline of midnight on a Sunday. If the lab didn’t start printing the next day, the picture wouldn’t be ready to open the following weekend. Midnight approached, and Scorsese was still fiddling with a scene in which a minor character orders a drink from a bar at the Copacabana. The problem was that Scorsese couldn’t clearly hear the words “Cutty Sark.”

Winkler said, no, that wasn’t the real problem. “Marty, that’s it,” he decreed. “The picture is over. You have to give it up. If you can’t hear ‘Cutty Sark,’ it’s just too bad.”

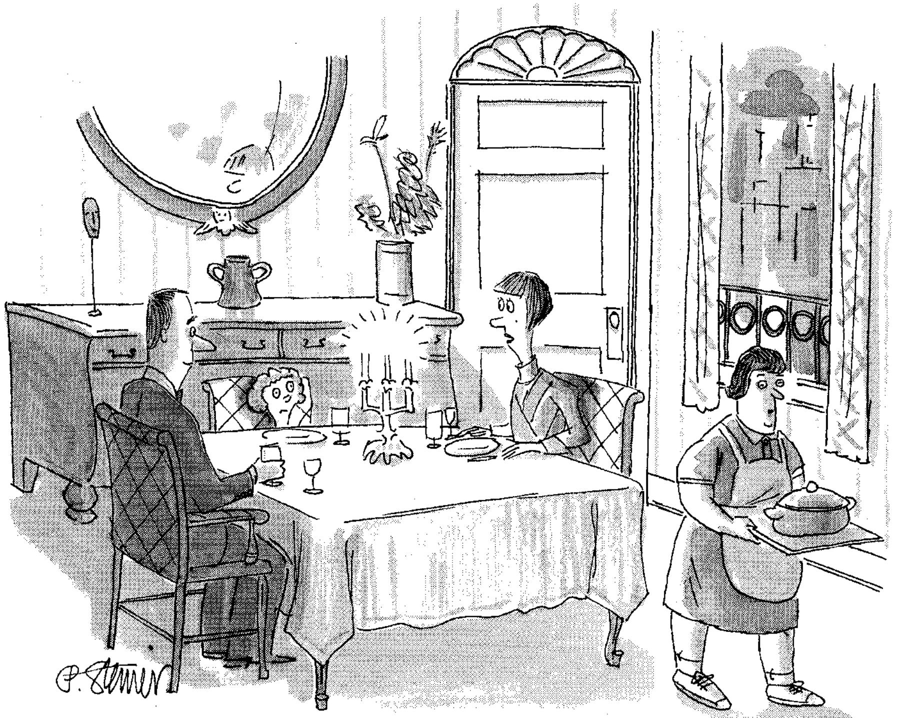
“I’m taking my name off the picture.”

“People are going to look at this picture one hundred years from now and say that it’s a great, great movie,” Winkler said. “Because you can’t hear ‘Cutty Sark,’ which, by the way, everybody else says they can hear, you’re taking your name off?”

“Yes, I’m taking my name off the picture.”

Fine, take your name off, Winkler told him, but it’s going to the lab.

A well-travelled tale—recounted in more than one book about Scorsese—and, I think, easily misconstrued, seemingly a vignette about neurotic perfectionism but actually a wholly characteristic illustration of the multilayered subtext that underlies his finest work. “Raging



“Of course, we love you. Hasn’t Maria told you?”

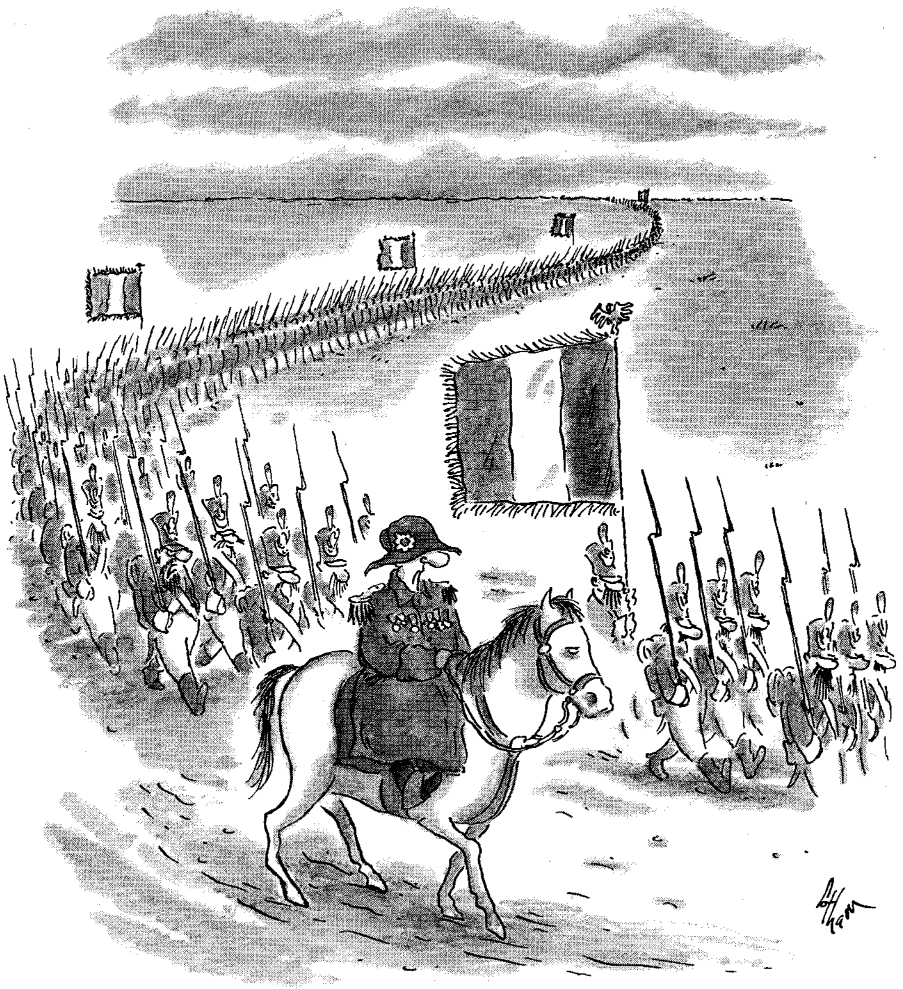
Bull" is, in the Scorsese mythology, the pivotal event. In the late seventies, his personal life was a mess. He was living in Los Angeles, treating himself to a second adolescence following the collapse of his second marriage (to the writer Julia Cameron). After "Mean Streets," "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," and "Taxi Driver," which were in varying degrees critical successes, he made "New York, New York," which was anything but. He agreed to direct Liza Minnelli in a Broadway musical, "The Act," but, recognizing that he was out of his element, left the production two weeks before it opened (and quickly closed). He was more than mildly depressed. Drug abuse, and abuse of his body in general, culminated in a terrifying episode of internal bleeding. Robert De Niro came to see him in the hospital and asked, in so many words, whether he wanted to live or die. If you want to live, De Niro proposed, let's make this picture—referring to "Raging Bull," an as-told-to book by Jake La Motta, the former world middleweight boxing champion, that De Niro had given him to read years earlier. "Raging Bull" became, in Scorsese's adaptation, the story of a severely flawed human being's quest for redemption. Which is to say that it was about his own quest for redemption. "I put everything I knew and felt into that film, and I thought it would be the end of my career," he said years later. "It was what I call a kamikaze way of making movies: pour everything in, then forget all about it and go find another way of life." He genuinely believed it would be his last Hollywood-studio project.

And the "Cutty Sark" line—what was that all about? Well, it was the whiskey of choice of Scorsese's father and his contemporaries, and the reference was a wink and a nod to them. The part of the bartender at the Copacabana, meanwhile, was played by Dominic Lofaro's father, who in real life was a bartender at the Copacabana. Dominic Lofaro? One of Scorsese's best friends from childhood (now dead), "a very interesting guy, as close as I could get to an intellectual in my neighborhood, he read books, he saw plays." Dominic was, along with one other pal, someone with whom the young Scorsese felt comfortable revealing his pencil-and-watercolor storyboards, the frame-by-frame blueprints of movies he imagined one day making. He'd begun drawing them at around age ten and stopped at fourteen—actually, stopped only temporarily, to be resumed when he arrived at film school at New York University—having completed his pièce de résistance, "The Eternal City," a seventy-five-millimetre saga set in ancient Rome, broken down into closeups, wide shots, medium shots, moving shots. As a full-grown professional, Scorsese laid out storyboards that were legendary for their specificity, their evidence of his matchless ability to visualize and map a movie in his head, along with soundtrack music, before he shot a single frame. Was it a coincidence that the storyboards for "Raging Bull" were the most elaborate he ever did? The fight scenes were diagrammed punch by punch, angle by angle. The unforgettable footage of the masochistic La Motta/De Niro's face exploding in his climactic third fight against Sugar Ray Robinson was conceived and laid out shot by shot to mirror the shower scene in "Psycho." . . . Cutty Sark? I would go on, except that with Scorsese you never really get to the bottom of this stuff.

The late movie critic Gene Siskel once asked Scorsese what he regarded as the most emblematic image in his body of work. Scorsese's answer was the title sequence of "Raging Bull." It's a slow-motion wide shot, its foreground a frame within the frame, delineated by the three ropes of a boxing ring. In the middle distance, the focal point, a robed, hooded figure inside the ring—La Motta, but we don't yet know that—shadowboxes. The background is bathed in fog. What I'd remembered about this tableau was its depiction of a lone warrior who must battle to survive, but when I looked at it again recently I decided I'd misremembered and misinterpreted it. I'd forgotten a handful of silhouetted background figures, barely discernible in the fog. And the fighter in the ring seemed no longer a ponderous metaphor but simply a man simultaneously at work and at play, moving air molecules with his arms and legs—something a newborn baby does just as instinctively and effectively. Was he a stand-in for Scorsese? Sure, to a degree. I also think Scorsese was one of the adumbrated shapes in the background—a camera flash goes off a couple of times—a witness, neither more nor less guilty than the dancing shadowboxer.

Two consecutive evenings a while back, Scorsese and I met at his home—in a warmly furnished parlor-floor living room, surrounded by neatly ordered bookshelves and framed posters of Jean Renoir's "Grand Illusion" (the only other significant wall hanging being a sixteenth-century crucifix)—where we covered, among other diverting topics, anger, guilt, pain, suffering, and violence. Our second conversation preceded dinner with Helen Morris, a fine-boned blond woman with finishing-school manners and Old New York bloodlines. She and Scorsese met in 1995, when she was an editor at Random House and was working on the second volume of Michael Powell's memoirs. Four years ago, they started living together, and last summer they married. Their infant daughter, Francesca, escorted by a nanny, made a couple of appearances while we talked, and Helen's deaf but excitable West Highland White terrier, Silas, also dropped by.

The joys of new fatherhood and domestic tranquillity notwithstanding, Scorsese had had, by his reckoning, "a rough fall." In late October, "Bringing Out the Dead" opened, accompanied by mixed but generally positive reviews. However, its grosses the first four weeks totalled only sixteen million dollars; by Thanksgiving it was fading fast; and by the time the Christmas-holiday movies turned up at the cineplexes it had all but disappeared. Like "Kundun," his previous and more lavishly praised endeavor, it never really found an audience. Inevitably, this box-office disappointment did nothing to leaven the atmosphere during discussions with the studios that had provisionally agreed to finance his next film, "Gangs of New York." The budget for "Gangs"—eighty-three and a half million dollars—would make it his most expensive picture. News items in the trade papers announced that Dis-



“Crazy bastard thinks he’s Napoleon.”

• •

ney and Miramax would put up the money, Leonardo DiCaprio would star, and production would start in midwinter. During 1999, Scorsese and Jay Cocks wrote and revised nine drafts of the screenplay. Each time they were done, they assumed they’d solved whatever problems had nagged them. But as the New Year arrived nothing was firmly resolved, including the question of whether the movie would get made.

To bring “Gangs of New York” to the screen would fulfill a vision of the city Scorsese had ruminated upon since childhood. On Prince Street, between Mott and Mulberry, next to Old St. Patrick’s Cathedral, the parish where he attended parochial school and served as an altar boy, stood a cemetery whose aged stones bore mainly Anglo, rather than familiar Italian, surnames. Who were these people? What had this corner of the world looked and sounded and smelled like when they were its inhabitants? Scorsese had absorbed fragments of century-and-a-half-old oral history—suggestive accounts of harrowing turf battles between mobs of nativist Protestants and recent-immigrant Irish Catholics—and in 1970 he happened upon the Herbert Asbury book, which gave a context to these inchoate emanations of the old neighborhood. He and Cocks wrote their first draft of “Gangs of New York” in 1976, and though the project lay dormant for more than two decades, it has withstood the vicissitudes of Scorsese’s career and refused to die. What’s in it, ultimately, for the auteur? Nothing more, really, than a chance to portray a city that millions of people think they know in a manner that no one has previously imagined imagining.

“If I get to make ‘Gangs of New York,’ ” he said, “I will have gotten to make every picture that I really, really wanted to make. If I don’t get to make it, I’ll move on to something else.”

But not so fast . . .

“Once I know that we’re moving forward with ‘Gangs,’ there are certain things I have to come to grips with in the script. The violence is the main thing. The violence is tricky, but that’s the way those characters behaved. I have to figure out how to shoot it. At the end, when everyone’s covered in dust and ashes, that’s got to be very stylized.”

Stylized violence. I thought, Well, Father Principe would be pleased. Father Principe was the priest from Old St. Pat’s who, when asked what he thought of his former acolyte’s interpretation of redemptive blood sacrifice—exemplified by the famous shootout at the end of “Taxi Driver”—said, “Too much Good Friday and not enough Easter Sunday.”

When the words “Scorsese” and “violence” are linked in my mind, I advert to the scene in “Casino” where a psychopathic gangster named Nicky Santoro, played to the hilt by Joe Pesci, puts a guy’s head in a vise after torturing him for two days because he refuses to give up some information. Before tightening the vise and slitting the victim’s throat, he implores him, “Please don’t make me do this!” By which we’re led to understand that Nicky’s just a working guy trying to keep his own head out of the vise. Earlier, we’ve seen Nicky the loving father cooking breakfast for his young son in his suburban kitchen. Later, we see him and his brother get beaten bloody with baseball bats and buried alive in the desert.

“I’m not interested in violence that way anymore,” Scorsese said, convincingly. “A lot of these guys”—in “Gangs of New York”—“don’t even have guns, they use bats. Well, I did that in ‘Casino.’ I don’t want to do violence like that again. I can’t even watch that scene. It’s upsetting, because I like those characters. And as far as the head in the vise is concerned—I should have played the whole thing on Joe’s face and the other actors’ faces but never shown the bulging eye in the vise. It has to do with the humanity of it. What it did to them mattered as much as what it did to the guy whose head was in the vise. If you can't show the humanity—let's say, the battle scene at the beginning of 'Gangs of New York'—then you have to find a way to do the violence in a nongraphic way, so that it doesn't become literally just scene after scene of people smashing each other across the head. Because that's what they did. Fighting was a pastime. What you have to understand about these gangs is that they relate directly to Anglo-Saxon tribes and Irish Celtic tribes. The fact that one is Protestant and the other's Catholic, that's just a place you come from. You're not arguing over the tenets of religion. These were warriors, and their gods were war gods. I'm dealing with making a film about barbarians. If I were younger, there's no doubt that I'd be out there to shock. Here I don't necessarily want to portray violence anymore in such a way that you lose half your audience halfway into the picture. Why should I?"

Implicit in all this is the question that "Gangs of New York," like every new venture, evokes for Scorsese: How do I muster whatever it takes to keep making these movies, telling these stories, when the process itself is steeped in pain and suffering?

"It comes out of a very Catholic point of view," he said. "I think it's very delicate. People say, 'What do you have to complain about? You make these movies, you do pretty much what you want.' And I think the problem is that talking about quote suffering unquote makes me sound like someone who takes himself way too seriously. But there's no other way I know to do the work. On a personal level, things are O.K. But the work alone is extremely painful. On the set, I'll look like I'm having a great time, but in the trailer, in the preproduction phase, in the editing room, it's painful to pull it all together. Maybe 'suffering' is a bad word—but I don't really celebrate anything. I stopped, like, in the mid-seventies, celebrating. . . . 'GoodFellas' felt good because a lot of people liked it, but just because a lot of people liked it doesn't mean it's really a good picture. And that's the other issue: How do I feel about myself and my own work *ultimately? Something I'll probably* never know is whether a picture's really good or not. I only know if it's right. In other words, I know that what I did was the way it should have been done."

"Why isn't 'right' synonymous with 'good'?"

"I'm not sure."

"Then what do you mean by 'good'?"

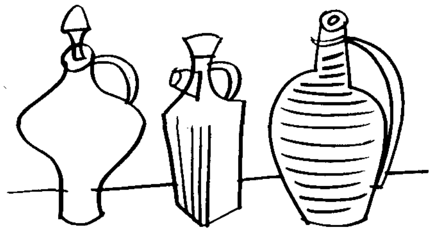
"I don't know." A three-beat pause. "O.K. Will it communicate to other people? Will it communicate to other people in the future, when the culture's changed? Will it speak to a different culture?"

So it wasn't very complicated. Scorsese merely desired what any artist desires: universal recognition and immortality.

On another occasion, Helen Morris said, "In the Catholic catechism there are all these absolute 'no's. Once you see how the world works, you get over these things. Marty never really has. You think of him as a child looking out the window and seeing people behaving badly. He could recognize it as a normal human instinct, but he understood that they have to get punished. He developed a sympathy for people doing bad things, studied the gangsters in the neighborhood, some of whom were good people. That dichotomy between Joe Pesci's character in 'Casino' being very good to his children and being a horrible person otherwise—guilt and sin and what you can do and can't do—it always comes down to the fact that you're going to get punished."

One snowy day not long ago, I got a call from Scorsese's assistant Gretchen Campbell, telling me that she was faxing something he thought I should read. A few minutes later, it came chugging out of my machine, a fourteen-page Introduction to the Loeb edition of Philostratus' "The Life of Apollonius of Tyana." I read the text, which said, among other things, that according to popular legend when Apollonius, a holy man and miracle worker of some sort who was born around the beginning of the Christian era, died he ascended bodily to Heaven. This was good to know, but why had Scorsese sent it?

"You and I had that conversation a while back about Simon the Magician and Apollonius of Tyana," he said the next time we spoke, by phone. "And I told you Simon the Magician was thought to have raised the dead twice, and that he disappeared in the presence of the emperor. Anyway, I recently saw a couple of television documentaries on the ancient world, and they sent me back to Philostratus. I first read Philostratus in 1983 or 1984, when I was looking at background material for 'The Last Temptation of Christ,' because I was interested in anything that discussed the pagans' answer to Jesus. And when I picked it up again the other day I realized I'd given you some wrong information.



"Simon the Magician comes out of the New Testament. In the Book of Acts, there's a confrontation between Simon and one of the Apostles; there were often these challenges between magicians and Apostles. Simon could have been a composite of different magicians of the period. Apollonius also could have been a composite figure. Apollonius appeared in front of one of the emperors, but he didn't disappear. And it wasn't Simon who disappeared either.

"I'm interested in the ancient world because of the nature of what they thought. It's a hundred and eighty degrees from the world I know, which is Christianity. It's the closest you can get to, I guess—this will sound funny—but it's the closest you can get to what we would think of as extraterrestrials. Pre-Christian. I guess 'Alien' depicts that. Or, a better example, the closest we've come to the alien persona on film is Fellini's 'Satyricon,' which depicts a sense of a world gone awry, crazy, a world in which you can be a victim any second, a dangerous place."

"Where are you now," I asked. "At home or the office?"

"I'm at home. I'm sitting up here in the den on the fourth floor, with two stacks of books on the ancient world. There are the main texts, and then there are the companion explanatory texts. The thing I really want to do these days is read Gibbon. But I don't have enough time. I get to look at these Roman and Greek classics—I try to find the time at least once a week. What have I been reading lately? Well, Philostratus. I'm very excited by that stuff. That's why I sent it to you. I couldn't rest until I got the confusion cleared up." ♦

LIFE AND LETTERS

JOURNALS

What in the author's diaries did her mother not want us to read?

BY SYLVIA PLATH

When the poet Sylvia Plath committed suicide in London on February 11, 1963, she was thirty years old. She was the author of one volume of poetry, an autobiographical novel, "The Bell Jar," published under a pseudonym, and a handful of short stories. She had two small children, Frieda, who was three, and Nicholas, who was one year old. She had just separated from her husband, the poet Ted Hughes.

"Ariel," Plath's best-known collection of poems, appeared a few years after her death. In 1975, her mother brought out a selection of correspondence, "Letters Home," and seven years later an edition of Plath's journals was published, edited by Frances McCullough and Ted Hughes, who controlled the estate. The edition includes journals from the summer of 1950, before Plath entered Smith College, until shortly before her death. During that time, she was awarded a Fulbright, attended the University of Cambridge, fell in love with another student, Richard Sassoon (a relative of the First World War poet), met Ted Hughes, married him four months later, moved back to the United States, taught at Smith, and returned to England.

But the publication of the journals was controversial. McCullough, in her introduction, admits that entries were excluded out of respect for people who appeared in them and were still alive. One such person was Plath's mother, and it is assumed that passages dealing with Plath's sexuality, for instance, were withheld in deference to the mother's sense of decorum. More controversial was Hughes's foreword, where he reveals that he destroyed one of Plath's journals ("I did not want her children to have to read it"), that another disappeared, and that a full two-thirds of the journals were not published. It would later emerge that some of these were to be sealed until the year 2013.

In September, 1998, a month before he died, Hughes unsealed the journals. The edited selection that follows (which includes some text that has appeared before) is drawn from the unabridged journals as prepared for publication by Karen Kukil, a curator at Smith College, where Plath's papers are kept.

DECEMBER, 1950. SMITH COLLEGE, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS. Another blind date. This one is older—partly bald, the girls said, and quiet-but-nice. You laugh nervously in the bedroom as Pat gets ready. She didn't know what she was getting you in for. You make some crack about going for the fatherly type. Your own father is dead. Pat looks worried, and you love her for it. She's so beautifully childlike and innocent as a Delicious apple.

You meet Bill in the car. It's his convertible. You get a side glance as he drives: not bad—hair receding on temples, but manly. Good blue eyes and a neat mouth. Neat features.

Conversation is bad from the beginning.

"Do you like football?" (This is like high school: find out her interests.)

You don't, but you can't squelch him quite so soon. You parry: "Do *you*?" (The old double-switch.)

"Yes. Where do you come from?"

"Wellesley, Mass." You run off glibly.

"Don't give me a hard time."

"What?" You don't get it.

Traffic occupies his attention. Later there is a group of you sitting in the fraternity house. His room is a senior suite on the first floor. A fire is going, and the rugs and pine panels are cozily collegiate. You are in a chair and he is on a footstool at your feet. Other couples are talking—most of them go steady. Anyhow, they're old hands. You've had all you can take of good-looking vacuums and shallow socialites. So you try to be basic. You are such a basic character yourself, anyway.

"You know," your voice is low, confidential, and you lean forward, elbows on knees, chin propped in hands, eyes level with his. You notice briefly that you can get lost in his eyes. An encouraging sign. They aren't lazy, they blaze at you. Heartened, you go on: "You know, it's too bad you don't get to know people in a crowd like this. So often you never do more than find out where your date lives."

He agrees.

O.K. "I'm willing to let you know me if you'll do the same. Then tonight won't be a total loss. You'll say: I know a little about a person that no one else knows very well."

He agrees, and you both lean forward, meaning business. He starts talking about political science. You ask questions, loving him for sharing a little of what matters with you. His father was a lawyer.

Then he asks if you want to dance. You dance in the dark living room. He holds you close, saying, "Sylvy, oh, Sylvy. You know, we're an awful lot alike."

You like that. You've scored a beachhead. You've got security after a fashion.

"Let's take a walk," he says. "I want to talk. We can't talk here."

You get your coat. Out the back door through the pantry. There are tin cans, boots, and an old mat by the door. It bangs behind you. The night is still, dry, and cold. The air is dry ice.

"I take a walk here Sundays," he says. He has led you up behind a fraternity house to a clearing in the pines overlooking the city. The perfect place to dis-

ALL IMAGES MORTIMER RARE BOOK ROOM/SMITH COLLEGE. LEFT: ©ESTATE OF SYLVIA PLATH

Sylvia Plath on Cape Cod, in 1952. Opposite, a 1959 snapshot of Ted Hughes on a cross-country trip he took with Plath.

cuss god and life. You sit down, leaning against a pine tree trunk.

"My father died two weeks ago," he says simply.

"Tell me." This is life; material; for sympathy.

"He wanted me to be a lawyer. I was there when he died. I came back and didn't talk to anyone. I went out with girls who didn't give a damn. . . . He used to talk to me the way you did about my thesis."

His head has fallen on your shoulder; he is lying next to you as you sit, impulsively patting his shoulder maternally. There, there, baby.

"Tell me. About the war." (He's a veteran. Pat told you. He was disabled. You wonder if he has a wooden leg and think how noble you would be if he had one.)

"Where were you hurt?" you ask delicately.

"I got hit in the lungs by a shell. I was in the hospital two years."

"What's it like to fight? To kill someone?" (Your curiosity is aflame. Granted, you can't be a man, but he can tell you how it was.)

He is nonchalant. "You eat, sleep, joke. What do you do if you see an accident? You try to fix him up. It's not so different."

You want to be worldly. You ask with impersonal gravity, "Have you had many women?"

"One in Hawaii. I cried the day we left; she was beautiful."

"Any others?"

"A girl in high school. She wasn't at all like you. She liked to drink a lot."

"Oh."

"Sylvy?"

"Yes?"

"I want you to be mine, all mine."

(You think vaguely of a marriage proposal. How lovely—he has become captivated by your keen and sympathetic mind.)

"When?" you ask materialistically. (Maybe he'll say something about after four years . . .)

"Now." His leg lifts over yours. You feel reality, cold and icy, on your illusions.

"No." You sit up, indignant.

He fights you. He is strong.

"Lay, Sylvy. Lay."

You are sick. He is damn strong. His arms and hands are pushing you down. You roll in the pine needles. You are scared. You think: This is one time your innocence won't help you; you're done.

But then you're on top, shaking him, your hair falling in your face. He has relaxed. He's listening to the words pouring out.

"I hate you. Damn you. Just because you're a boy. Just because you're never worried about having babies!"

You trail off. You sound ridiculous. You are playing a part. You want him, yet you remember: "Once a woman has intercourse she isn't satisfied." "You need time and security for full pleasure." "You'll be finished at Smith."

So you stop, explaining weakly how it is.

He gets up, after you stop shaking him, and you sit up yourself. He acts hurt—petulant.

"All right." He goes off muttering into the shadows. "I'm a fool. Getting drunk and trusting a damn girl. All right."

It is too dark to see where he has gone.

"Bill!" You call softly, "Come back."

No answer; no sound.

All right, he's getting even by leaving you alone in the woods.

You get up and start walking to the path. The pine branches snap underfoot. It is black and strange. He is sitting over there on a stump, head in hands, muttering, or crying. You approach and kneel penitently before him.

"I'm sorry."

A lot of muttering and petulance.

"You're acting like a spoiled brat," you say.

"You don't know how it is," he says. "You can't, when you're all burning, on fire inside."

(O.K., so you don't.)

At last he forgives you. (What for? You should be forgiving him.)

Reconciled, he lies on his back, his head in your lap. You sit, cross-legged, cradling his head.

"Bend down. Kiss me."

(After what you've refused, it's a small favor, but you hold back.)

"Bend down." His arm pulls your head to his.

You kiss. He takes your hand, pulls it along. You touch soft, writhing flesh. You scream in a quick indrawn breath. So this is what it's like to have a boy want you to masturbate him. You pull away, disgusted, yet not disgusted. Lightning hasn't struck you. It's only . . . but you say, "No no no no no no no."

He realizes now, maybe, that you are only a kid, only eighteen. So you go back to the fraternity house. You know that you won't go out with him again if he asks. But you will never take a walk. You will never be alone. And you hate him because he has deprived you of that—walks and aloneness. And you hate him because he is a boy.

AUGUST 12, 1952. CAPE COD. Outside, in the wet low fog, there was the low little car, a suave sleek red M.G., waiting. "Oh, no," the girl said. She had never ridden in an M.G. before. And red was her favorite color.

"Oh, yes," he said, opening the door. She got in, tying the red silk scarf over her hair and settling low and comfortable beside him. It was strange, riding cradled so open, so near the ground.

They went careening along the shore highway, with the blur of fog closing them in. Around corners, the squeal of wheels. The car braces, leans, tilts back again. An Esso station looms light ahead—the red and black and white sign saying gasoline suddenly and coherently in the lonely and spaceless dark. Slows, then gone, a shrivelling puddle of light.

They are laughing and he is singing loudly some dirty songs. He is in a glee club somewhere, she thinks.

"You know," he looks down at her, "I don't even know your name." He is grinning, his face lean and boyish behind the glasses.

"What!" She laughs, and tells him. After all, what has a name got to do with this night and fog? She would gladly be a Marcia or an Elaine or a Dori, being still she and riding with this boy in an M.G.

So now he knows her name, and things are very conventional. He tells her he is a bastard, and he has just turned seventeen. Every other word he swears. He's old for seventeen, and he tells her she is cute.

She is feeling, at this point, very maternal. It is occurring to her that she is almost three years older than he is.

"I am very tired," he tells her. "You drive awhile." He stops the car by the endless road, a hollowed-out drive, and they trade seats. She gets used to the feel of the little car, good little red shiny

M.G. And her foot goes down on the accelerator.

By now his head is on her shoulder and his feet up on the door, knees bent, dangling over. He is drinking beer and sharing it with her, feeding her potato chips, and sleepily singing.

"You know," he is saying, "I used to raise hell with women. Petting and all that stuff. I've been out with some sluts, and ask any girl in Flushing about my reputation and she'll tell you . . ."

"So, now what?" the girl is asking, her eyes on the road.

"So now it's different. Like you. You're intelligent. Not every blonde has got brains, you know. It's your personality I like. Not sex. You're no raving tearing beauty."

That last could hurt a little if she let it. But it doesn't because she doesn't.

She is thinking of how, even though she started late, there have been all the mouths and all the hands belonging to all the boys without faces and some with faces . . . some with blurred faces, indistinct now.

"Have you ever liked two boys at once?" he is asking. "I mean, both a lot at once. Like now I like Andy, she's as sweet as they come, and nice. But I like you. You're funny as hell, and cute. And there's that redhead in the Dairy Bar. Wonder if she's working tonight . . .

"You know," he says, "you have met a lot of boys like me and I have never before met anybody like you. You've got it."

"What have I got?"

"I don't know. You've just got it." He is leaning toward her, looking intense and baffled.

She feels like smiling at him, and her smile is tender. "You have such a long while ahead of you. It makes me quite dizzy to think of all the beautiful young girls now growing up. And I will be growing older all the while they are growing up."

"I don't care." He leans over and kisses her hand on the steering wheel. Her voice had been, at that last remark, bright and edged with fear. "I don't care. I like you. You're sweet."

"No," she says, "it is all right now. But just for now. Because it is getting late."

So they are near the house where she is living, and she drives up in the driveway.

"You can walk me to the door," she says. He is still groggy and sleepy, shaking his head. All at once he says Oh and puts his arms around her.

She pushes him back, her hands against his chest, her mouth saying: No, not this, as she looks at his mouth, young and tender, asking Please, lips asking Please. It is much better this way, she thinks—I am directing both of us. Even the girl in me that would like to lead you into warm ways of love. Any girl would, Andy maybe, or any other little girl you can neck with or pet. But not me. It is much better this way.

"All right," he says. "I am not hungry, though. I do not want you to think that I am hungry."

On the way to the door he staggers a little; she steadies him by the arm. "On two cans of that stuff only," he says bewildered. "Say, would you like the rest of that case?"

"No," she says laughing. "They don't think I drink. You keep them. Don't let them go to waste."

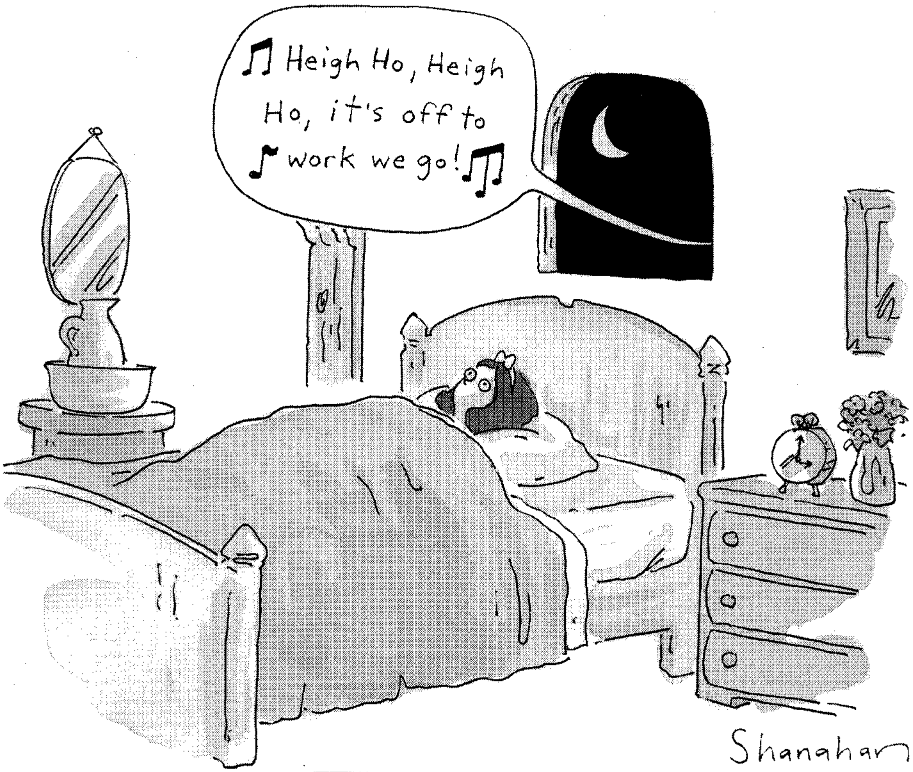
"I can't," he says. "If Mother found them she'd kill me. You know how mothers are," he finishes apologetically.

"Yeah," she says softly. "Sure, I know." You kid. You wonderful damn confused kid, she thinks. Me, an old college woman, and you a prep-school boy. God, the years, the years. Eaten by the raw swollen wind of time. Like the M.G. ate up all that big nothingness of dark road.

"Good night," he says, "but not goodbye."

"Good night," she says, all at once grateful that it is not quite yet the almost goodbye she had been fearing.

September 20. Smith College. So I will prove to him I am not the shy respectable naïve fool he thinks me. We park, and I, drowsing on his shoulder, am very glad to see the dark road and the leaves all around. I am sleepy and feel very sexy in my black velvet dress. So I just stay relaxed, not saying anything, and he leans down and kisses me on the mouth for a long lovely while. I do not care, I will stop thinking. He kisses very nicely, and I will enjoy being kissed for what it is. I am growing quite warm and desiring, and his hands are good and strong behind my back, holding me to him, and I like to wait while his mouth kisses my neck, moving down to where my neckline goes deep,


♫ Heigh Ho, Heigh Ho, it's off to ♪ work we go! ♫
Shanahan

SNOW WHITE AND THE 24/7 DWARFS

and my breasts hurt, swollen a little, waiting for his hands to begin, and my hair is falling loose over my bare shoulders, and my mouth is soft and wet and wanting under his. For a long time no one says anything. Then he says, "Well, what do you know, a woman is being born."

"Are you surprised?"

"No." Simply.

"I didn't think you would be. I guess I am trying to prove something. We haven't gotten drunk."

"We didn't need to."

"But you said . . ."

"I know I said. It was a dirty thing to say, wasn't it?"

Stymied. I want to say: There is a purpose, a future. This is for some goal, some end. But it wasn't. The end was coition, physically. But I wasn't having any of that. I was being pragmatic. I felt like being kissed, petted, made love to. I would take it as far as I wanted to. To hell with him. I am not a tease, nor a whore—he could go home unsatisfied, rape a stranger, I didn't care. He had tried, chivalrously (knowing a woman would be insulted if he didn't). He is smart. He knows what he can expect from me. So he can take the consequences of associating with me.

To him I would perhaps be a dead end. No intercourse, just a halfway deal. But I am not yet the smart woman who can keep her reputation and be a high-class whore on the side. Not *yet*, anyway.

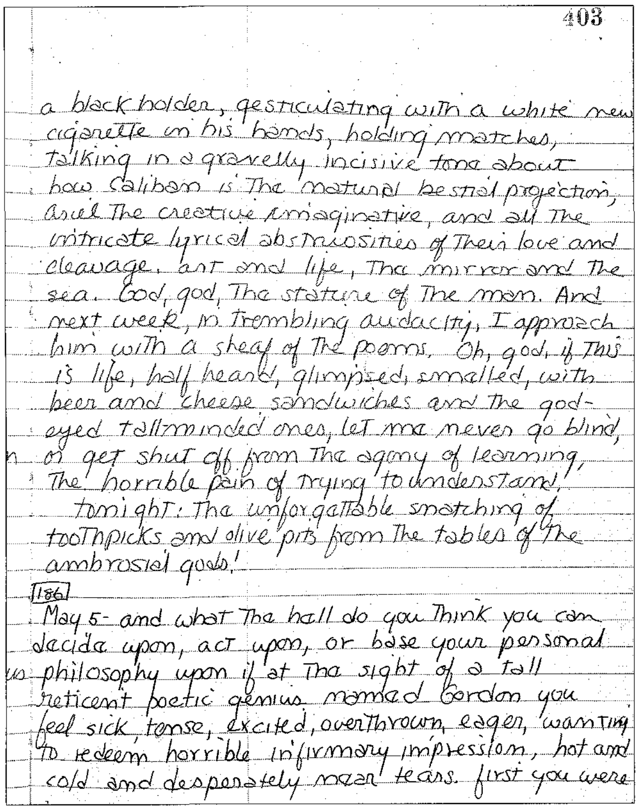
JANUARY 22, 1953. I accept the idea of a creative marriage now as I never did before; I believe I could paint, write, and keep a home and husband, too. Ambitious, wot? I also believe I probably wouldn't die by "confining" myself to one man for fifty years. Oh, it is a great huge enormous decision, but I must stay aware of this: I could be more of a prisoner as an older, tense, cynical career girl than as a richly creative wife and mother who is always growing intellectually.

And with him there would be a great, evolving, intellectual dignity to life. I am sure of it. I can walk tall and proud beside him in my body and in my mind. How will it work out? I don't know. In one year, two years, I will look back at the blind alleys I wander in and smile and think: My! How inevitable this past seems now!

MAY 5. And what the hell do you think you can decide upon, act upon, or base your personal philosophy upon if at the sight of a tall, reticent poetic genius named Gordon you feel sick, tense, excited, overthrown, eager, wanting to redeem horrible infirmary impression, hot and cold and desperately near tears? First you were almost going to condescend to marry M. *even if* he had bad skin, barbarian parents, cold calculating drives, male vanity, and an unimaginative and rather prosaic way of making love while writing out chemistry formulas. Then you heard about him making out with that empty-headed, intense, superficial, childish, and sexy bitch who fought all one weekend with his roommate (whom, she yelled at you, she loved desperately).

Your vanity is hurt. That is superficial and negligible. What hurts most is your naïve faith in his pureness (which paradoxically you forgot in the surprising and passionate proficiency of the thin, much weaker Ray just three nights ago). Oh god, there is no faith or permanence or solace in love un-

LEFT: ©ESTATE OF SYLVIA PLATH; RIGHT: JAMES COYNE/BLACK STAR



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a black holder, gesticulating with a white new
cigarette in his hands, holding matches,
talking in a gravelly incisive tone about
how Caliban is the natural bestial projection,
Ariel the creative imaginative, and all the
intricate lyrical abstrusities of their love and
cleavage, art and life, the mirror and the
sea. God, god, the stature of the man. And
next week, in trembling audacity, I approach
him with a sheaf of the poems. Oh, god, if this
is life, half heard, glimpsed, smelled, with
beer and cheese sandwiches and the god-
eyed tall-minded ones, let me never go blind,
or get shut off from the agony of learning,
the horrible pain of trying to understand!
tonight: the unforgettable snatching of
toothpicks and olive pits from the tables of the
ambrosial gods!'

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May 5 - and what the hell do you think you can
decide upon, act upon, or base your personal
philosophy upon if at the sight of a tall
reticent poetic genius named Gordon you
feel sick, tense, excited, overthrown, eager, wanting
to redeem horrible infirmary impression, hot and
cold and desperately mean tears. first you were

"And then he kissed me bang smash on the mouth and ripped my hairband off, my lovely red hairband scarf which has weathered the sun and much love, and whose like I shall never again find, and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked."

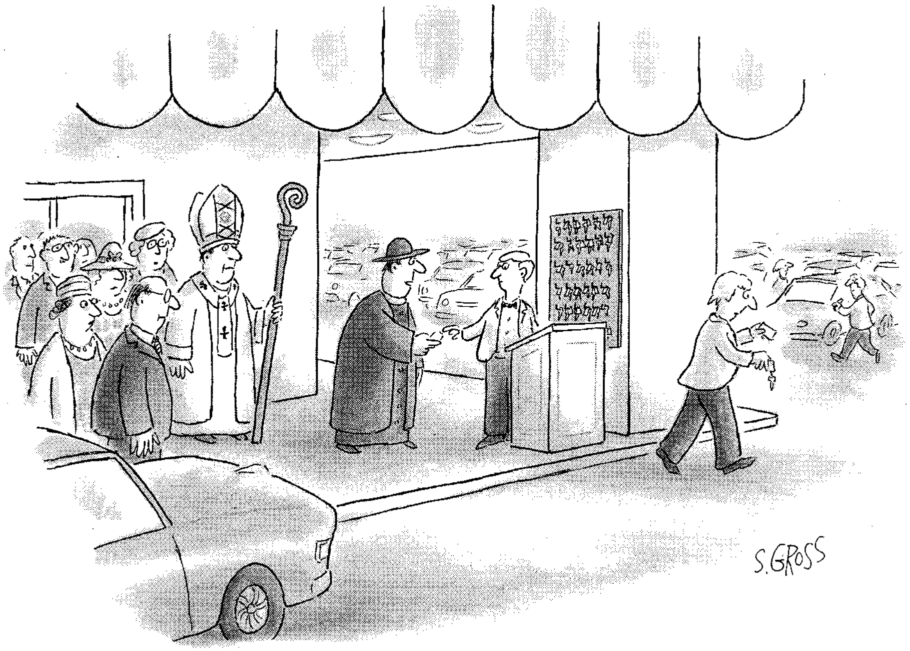
less—unless—the mind adores, the body adores. And yet the fear is always there: tomorrow it will all be different, tomorrow I will hate the way he chuckles at a joke, or combs his hair with a dirty pocket comb. Tomorrow he will see that my nose is fat and my skin is sallow, and we will both be two ugly, vain, selfish, hedonistic, dissatisfied people.

FEBRUARY 26, 1956. CAMBRIDGE. Then the worst happened, that big, dark, hunky boy, the only one there huge enough for me, who had been hunching around over women, and whose name I had asked the minute I had come into the room, but no one told me, came over and was looking hard in my eyes and it was Ted Hughes. I started yelling again about his poems and quoting: "most dear unscratchable diamond" and he yelled back, colossal, in a voice that should have come from a Pole, "You like?" and asking me if I wanted brandy, and me yelling yes and backing into the next room past the smug shining blub face of dear Bert, looking as if he had delivered at least nine or ten babies, and bang the door was shut and he was sloshing brandy into a glass and I was sloshing it at the place where my mouth was when I last knew about it.

We shouted as if in a high wind, about the review, and he saying Dan knew I was beautiful, he wouldn't have written it about a cripple, and my yelling protest in which the words "sleep with the editor" occurred with startling frequency. And then it came to the fact that I was all there, wasn't I, and I stamped and screamed yes, and he had obligations in the next room, and he was working in London, earning ten pounds a week so he could later earn twelve pounds a week, and I was stamping and he was stamping on the floor and then he kissed me bang smash on the mouth and ripped my hairband off, my lovely red hairband scarf which has weathered the sun and much love, and whose like I shall never again find, and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked. And when he kissed my neck I bit him long and hard on the cheek, and when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face. His poem "I did it, I." Such violence, and I can see how women lie down for artists.

MONDAY, MARCH 26. PARIS. Arrived in Paris early Saturday evening exhausted from sleepless holocaust night with Ted in London. It was twilight when we [Plath and an acquaintance, Emmet Larkin] found a room for me at this Hotel Béarn and I felt absolutely deserted. Overcome by a disastrous impulse to run to [Richard] Sassoon as formerly; I took myself in leash and washed my battered face, smeared with a purple bruise from Ted, and my neck raw and wounded, too, and decided to walk out toward Richard's and search for food on the way.

I rang at No. 4, outside of which an old beggar woman was singing in a mournful monotone. The dark and suspicious concierge met me and blandly told me that Sassoon was not back nor would he be back probably until after Easter. I had been ready to bear a day or two alone, but this news shook me to the roots. I sat down in her living room and wrote an incoherent letter while the tears fell scalding and wet on the paper



"It's a Popemobile."

and her black poodle patted me with his paw and the radio blared: "Smile though your heart is breaking." I was really amazed at my situation; never before had a man gone off to leave me to cry after. Dried tears, patted poodle, and asked where could find restaurant; wandered through fruit stalls in Champ de Mars, through flowers and crowds bearing palm sprays (not like ours but all green small sprigs of leaves), and found large Brasserie where, I realized after entering, Sassoon had taken Jane and me to eat that first night. Ordered Assiette Anglaise and coffee (which came black and sour) and read Anouilh's "Antigone," that magnificent part the chorus does about tragedy.

Gradually, amazingly, a calm stole over me. A feeling that I had as much right to take my time eating, to look around, to wander and sit in the sun in Paris as anyone; even more right. I felt downright happy when I ordered another cup of coffee with cream and it was much better. Paid bill and wandered off along Seine browsing in bookstalls and half hoping I'd meet Gary Haupt. Walked around Notre-Dame to Marché aux Fleurs, where hundreds of yellow, red, and green birds chirped and skipped in cages: *mille oiseaux de toutes couleurs!*

To bed to feverish sleep, perhaps reaction to wild destructive London night which makes me so sad, now I think of it, because of Michael Boddy coming in (I wouldn't have minded just Luke) and now all Cambridge will be duly informed that I am Ted's mistress or something equally absurd. He suggested we go to Yugoslavia; if only he knew me rightly! I foolishly did not give him time. I was so tired and so hungry. Such mistakes I make. Oh well, let them talk; I live in Whitstead and can ignore much.

April 16. Re Ted: you have accepted his being; you were desperate for this and you know what you must pay: utter vigilance in Cambridge (rumor will be legion, but there must be no proof; never drink, keep calm); loss of Richard and whistling void in guts when he leaves you with memory of his big iron violent virile body, incredible tendernesses, and rich voice which makes poems and quirked people and music. Knowledge of his utter big luck and power and blast by it as he goes on to hundreds of other women, other poems—"I can make more love the more I make love." If Richard's tenderness and virility and aesthetic rapport made you despair of going and finding one after him, you will *never* find a huge derrick-striding Ted with poems and richness, he makes you feel small, too secure: he is not tender and has no love for you. Only a body—a girl-poet, an interlude. Consider yourself lucky to have been stabbed by him; never complain or be bitter or ask for more than normal human consideration as an integrated being. Let him go. Have the guts. Make him happy: cook, play, read, but don't lose others—keep other cups and flagons full; never accuse or nag; let him run, reap, rip; and glory in the temporary sun of his ruthless force.

Hughes and Plath married on June 16, 1956.

July 20, 1957. Cape Cod. Ted is wonderful: how to get it down? All of a piece, smelling lovely as a baby, a hay field, strawberries under leaves, and smooth white, browning to tan, with his great lion head of hair erupting. We are clean now, daily bathing the muck of Eltisley, which will always signify spiders in clots of dust, black coal sludge sticking to brick floors, smeared windows, pale yellow orange walls, untidy Sassoons—bathing that muck off from our bones in the great salt tides of the Atlantic, the hot sun.

Sunday, January 26, 1958. Northampton. Ted's courses begin Wednesday at the U. of M. It will be good honing and discipline for his mind—to articulate, to come up against forms of poetry and prose in words before college people. We will work hard this term, courage, Oh courage, but only four months seems not so long, to pile up, we hope, at least $3,000 saved from our salaries and $1,000 from writing. My miserable tense knotted sleepless nights now, no sleep till dawning and then a formless drugged morning, must go. Tonight: black wet rain: world of glisten and slop—rushed out after Ted talked with Gibian over the phone to read a good review of his book in the *Virginia Quarterly*. How my voice must change to be heard: brash, concrete.

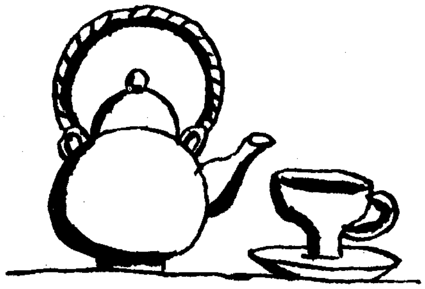
Saturday, March 1. A groaning start: sky gray, air gray as the day—dirty dishwater in the kitchen, all the curded cups and grease-filmed glasses. Blankets untucked and the insecurity of pulling at them for cover, for heat, and they plucking loose, sliding away. Woke, sheet wound in a thick noose around my neck. Sipped, aching, skin-tendered, my coffee while Ted's upper lip gouted thick red drops and runs of blood: he cut it. Nausea turned me from honey and toast: empty-stomached I go forth to class. When I come back the week will of force be ended. I yearn to my writing: must work to get my central novel chapter published as a story.

This morning after Ted left, I blest his diminishing black figure, turned to chanting verses and got magnificent sense of power: learned the brief "call for the robin redbreast and the wren." I will learn Eliot, Yeats, Dunbar—chanted the "Lament for the Makaris" on the toilet. I will learn Ransom, Shakespeare, Blake and Thomas and Hopkins—all those who said to words "stand stable here" and made of the moment, of the hustle and jostle of gray, anonymous and sliding words a vocabulary to stanch wounds, to bind up broken limbs and "set the skull back about the head"—my own husband-in-poetry's words. I am married to a poet: miracle of my green age. Where breathes in the same body a poet and a proper man but in Ted?

Tuesday, April 8. Still in bed, still feeling lousy and sneezing like the Great Twitch the minute I get up in Ted's woollen bathrobe, my long practical and unlovely peach flannel nightgown, and black wool knee socks. This cold has no right to still be wet and snuffly after three days. Have been wandering around all morning since Ted left at seven-thirty after making me a cup of coffee in that lovely glossy white china Stangl pottery cup with the pink tulip on one side and the light-blue springing forget-me-not on the other. Slipped into my dirty red down-at-the-heel ballet shoes (which I must throw out) and tried to sit in the relatively clean and unfeverish living room after wandering about collecting dirty plates and glasses and stacking them intricately in the yellow plastic dishpan. No good. Began to sneeze, wetly stream, the left side of my head hardening to unbreathable concrete. Back to bed, with the elegant black mohair shawl Ted gave me draped around my shoulders. Made myself a pot of too strong tea and drank three cups while I read—Frank Sousa's story about two drunk women which is a steal from Salinger's "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" and then read "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" and four or five other Salinger stories. I have no energy. Feel strong as a wet nylon stocking. And not half as clean. Ted's key is at last turning in the lock.

Thursday, April 10. He is my life now, my male muse, my polestar centering me steady and right. O god, if I stayed in the whole week (and not just a measly four days) I would posthaste recover but I *must* hear Ted read at Harvard tomorrow (and look forward to meeting the long-looked-at poetess Adrienne Cecile Rich) and I will not be on sick leave now, for it would make my leaving tomorrow impossible and involve me unpleasantly with the department again. Yesterday—how casual, how cool I am become—I received my first acceptance from *The Ladies' Home Journal* of a poem. This doesn't really count at all for my book, but is pleasantly lucrative: They pay me $10 a line. I thought I would get only beginner's rate $3 a line and so was left breathless today with a $140 check—feel as if I'd sold an unsightly yet solidly lucrative pink-flowered pig.

Monday, May 19. Through with my last classes and a hot bath and disabused of many ideals, visions, and faiths. Revulsion at much in myself and more in Ted, whose vanity is not dead, but thrives. Irony: in almost two years he has turned me from a crazy perfectionist and promiscuous human-being-lover to a misanthrope, and—at Tony's, at Paul's [Anthony Hecht and Paul Roche]—a nasty, catty, and malicious misanthrope. How he praised this in me: I at last "saw" the real world. And just as I rose to a peak of nastiness for perhaps the first time in my life—I have never been catty professionally and publicly—I got the final insight: not only am I just as nasty as everybody else, but so is Ted. A liar and a vain smiler. How it works: how irony is the spice of life. My novel will hardly end with love and marriage: it will be a story, like James's, of the workers and the worked, the exploiters and the exploited: of vanity and cruelty. Who knows who Ted's next book will be dedicated to? His navel. His penis.



Well, start with the background to the facts—the misanthropy felt for all except Ted and myself, the faith in Ted and myself and distrust of all others. Add last night—Ted reading the part of Creon for Paul's translation of Oedipus and practically telling me not to come. I said all right, but rebelled. I am superstitious about not hearing Ted read. I ran on up to the lighted colonial front of Sage Hall, white columns glowing in the electric lights, not a person in sight, empty echoing pavements. Ted stood on the left of the stage, far off, next to Bill Van Voris [an English professor at Smith], in the center, as Oedipus.

Ted looked slovenly: his suit jacket wrinkled as if being pulled from behind, his pants hanging, unbelted, in great folds, his hair black and greasy in the light. The minute I came in he knew it, and I knew he knew it, and his voice let the reading down. He was ashamed of something. He gave the last line with the expression of a limp dishtowel and I felt this faint flare of disgust, of misgiving. There he stood, next to the corrupt, white snail-faced Van Voris, whose voice luxuriated over the words: loins, incest, bed, foul.

Ted didn't come to meet me afterward. He sat with a mean wrong face over the piano, banging out a strident one-finger tune, hunched, a tune I'd never heard before. Nor had I seen that odd, lousy smile since Falcon Yard.

So today is my last day [teaching]. I had made a kind of ceremonial stab at asking Ted to drive down with me till I got through this afternoon, so I could see him and rejoice the very minute I got through my first class. Ted arranged to bring books into the library and meet me in the car: to be waiting there till my classes ended. When I came out, I ran to the parking lot, half-expecting to meet Ted on the way to the car, but more sure of finding him inside. Our car was empty and the emptiness struck me as odd, particularly on this day which we have counted toward for twenty-eight weeks. I drove up to the library, figuring Ted would be in the reading room, oblivious of time, immersed in the *New Yorker* article by Edmund Wilson. He was not there. As I came striding out of the cold shadow of the library, my bare arms chilled, I had one of those intuitive visions. I knew what I would see, what I would of necessity meet, and I have known for a very long time, although not sure of the place or date of the first confrontation. Ted was coming up the road from Paradise Pond, where girls take their boys to neck on weekends. He was walking with a broad, intense smile, eyes into the uplifted doe eyes of a strange girl with brownish hair, a large lipsticked grin, and bare thick legs in khaki Bermuda shorts. I saw this in several sharp flashes, like blows. I could not tell the color of the girl's eyes, but Ted could, and his smile, though open and engaging as the girl's was, took on an ugliness in context. His smile became too white-hot, became fatuous, admiration-seeking. He was gesturing, just finishing an observation, an explanation. The girl's eyes souped up giddy applause. She saw me coming. Her eye started to guilt and she began to run, literally, without a goodbye, Ted making no effort to introduce her. She hasn't learned to be deceitful yet in her first look, but she'll learn fast. He thought her name was Sheila; once he thought my name was Shirley.

Later, much later. Sometime the next morning. The fake excuses. Vague confusions about name and class. All fake. All false. And the guilty look of stunned awareness of the wrong presence. So I can't sleep. Partly out of shock myself at the cheapness of vanity, the heavy ham act, matinée idol: hanging over, great inert heavy male flesh: "Let's make up." Oh, such good fuckings. Why so weary, so slack all winter? Aging or spending. Fake. Sham ham. No explanations, only obfuscations. That is what I cannot stand, why I cannot sleep. He snorts and snores even now in smug sleep.

I made the most amusing, ironic, and fatal step in trusting Ted was unlike other vain and obfuscating and self-indulgent men. I have served a purpose, spent money, Mother's money, which hurts most, to buy him clothes, to buy him a half year, eight months of writing, typed hundreds of times his poems. Well, so much have I done for modern British and American poetry.

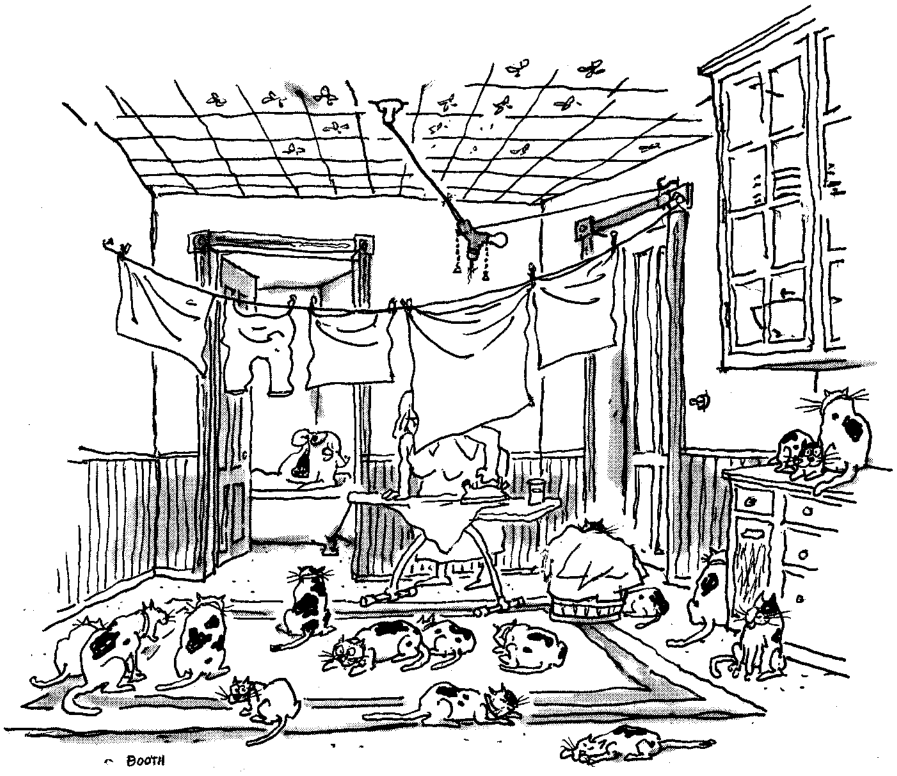
What I cannot forgive is dishonesty—and no matter what, or how hard, I would rather know the truth of which I today had such a clear and devastating vision from his mouth than hear foul evasions, blurrings, and rattiness. His picking his nose, peeling off his nails and leaving them about, his greasy unkempt hair—what does this matter? Why did I make his concerns my own and wish to see him his best and finest? I won't bother now; the dirt is too deep for Halo shampoo and Lux soap, the raggedness too far-frayed for the neat nip of trimming shears. So what now.

"Of course, now I'm just the class clown, but eventually I'd like my own sitcom."

Friday, September 5. Boston. Almost midnight. Hot, weary, having slept a bare four hours last night, Luke arriving late and talking till dawn—Ted's friend, stander-by of those days of fury I remember. Now we are quieter, placider, aging. A day of hopes and frustrations—wherein we have, in effect, made and lost three hundred pounds. A letter from the Guinness Brewery in the morning saying Ted had won first prize for the best poem ["The Thought-Fox"] in England by a living author this past year—an honor and sum equalling his book's revenue. We sat over beers and swordfish and fried scallops in a Commercial Street tavern: gradually the sickening understanding grew on me that "The Thought-Fox" was not technically eligible for the money because it had first been published in *The New Yorker* in America, not Britain. We wandered, disconsolate, across the broad, truck-crowded, railroad-tracked Atlantic Avenue to the wharves—T-Wharf, with its sagging houses, rickety wooden balconies, window boxes of petunias and geraniums. Saw crates of crabs, lithe, shiny, speckled. One crab fell outside the crate, sidled to the edge of the wharf and dropped down, pale stomach up, into the black garbage-and-oil-slicked water to sink out of sight.

Phone not on when we came home. A wearying comedy of errors. Dozed in heat. Rose exhausted to drink tea, make an apple pie. Luke and Ted talk in living room—I too tired. I have done nothing, little. I *must* rest this weekend and start writing. Eyes droop—what will become of new year?

Saturday, September 27. I shall end these pages, I hope, in a more placid, optimistic mind than heretofore. After yesterday's climax of frustration—dazing, humid heat, late rising, botched haircutting, overloading of groceries and staggering up the steep Hancock Street to the jeers of passing policemen, the insolence of an ugly little landlady when I asked, breathless and pained, if she had a phone ("Ve don do dat here, let strangers into da living room"), the ride offered in the nick of time—Ted's depression, the laundry to collect, which got smutty on the line upstairs, the usual depressing call from Mother, depressing because of her hardships at work, her unspoken nervousness about our fortunes, my lack of a job—and the sense of nothing written, nothing read, nothing done—after all this, *today* dawned cool, gray with consoling rain, limiting alternatives.



"It's Oscar time—there's that special tingle in the air."

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12. "Doctor, can I still go on hating my mother?"

"Of course you can: hate her hate her hate her."

"Thank you, Doctor. I sure do hate her."

What do I do? I don't imagine time will make me love her. I can pity her: she's had a lousy life; she doesn't know she's a walking vampire. But that is only pity. Not love.

On top she is all smarmy nice: she gave herself to her children, and now by God they can give themselves back to her: why should they make her worry worry worry? She's had a hard life: married a man, with the pre-thirty jitters on her, who was older than her own mother, with a wife out West. Married in Reno. He got sick the minute the priest told them they could kiss. Sick and sicker. She figured he was such a brute she couldn't, didn't love him. Stood in the shower forcing herself to enjoy the hot water on her body because she hated his guts. He wouldn't go to a doctor, wouldn't believe in God, and heiled Hitler in the privacy of his home. She suffered. Married to a man she didn't love. The Children were her salvation. She put them First. Herself bound to the track naked and the train called Life coming with a frown and a choo-choo around the bend. "I am bloody bloody bloody. Look what they do to me. I have ulcers, see how I bleed. My husband whom I hate is in the hospital with gangrene and diabetes and a beard and they cut his leg off and he disgusts me and he may live a cripple and wouldn't I hate that. Let him die." (He died.) "The blood clot hit his brain and wasn't it lucky he died because what a bother he'd be around the house, a living idiot and me having to support him in addition to the two children."

She came home crying like an angel one night and woke me up and told me Daddy was gone, he was what they called dead, and we'd never see him again, but the three of us would stick together and have a jolly life anyhow, to spite his face. He didn't leave hardly enough money to bury him because he lost on the stocks, just like her own father did, and wasn't it awful. Men men men.

So Mother never had a husband she loved. Her daughter had to disgrace her by going to a mental hospital: bad, naughty, ungrateful girl. (She had a lover, didn't she? She necked and petted and flew to New York to visit Estonian artists and Persian Jew wealthy boys and her pants were wet with the sticky white filth of desire. Put her in a cell, that's all you could do. She's not my daughter. Not my nice girl. Where did that girl go?)

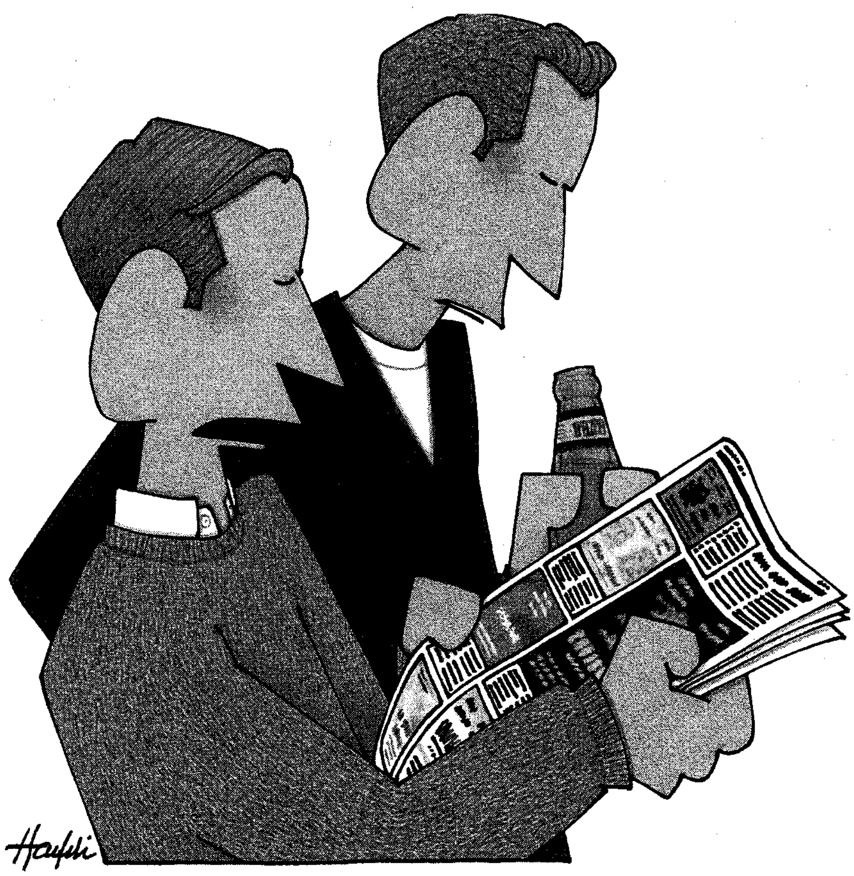
I could pass her in the street and not say a word, she depresses me so. But she is my mother.

What to do with her, with the hostility, undying, which I feel for her? I want, as ever, to grab my life from out under her hot itchy hands. My life, my writing, my husband, my unconceived baby. She's a killer. Watch out. She's deadly as a cobra under that shiny green-gold hood.

I'll have my own babies, thank you.

I'll have my own husband, thank you. You won't kill him the way you killed my father. He has a soul, he has sex strong as it comes. He isn't going to die so soon. So keep out. You won't make him ashamed by offering me $300 for a course in stenotyping for my birthday (by implication, so I can work and earn money because he probably never will). My husband supports me in soul, body, and by feeding me bread and poems. I happen to love him. I can't hug him enough. I love his work and he fascinates me every minute because he is new and changing minute by minute and making new things every day. He wants me to change and make things, too. What I make and how I change is up to me. He says O.K., he is glad.

What doesn't he have? A steady job that brings in seven thousand a year. A private income. All the stuff that lots of money buys. He has his brains, his heat, his love for his work and his talent for it



"Which should we go see: the straight romantic comedy, where the heroine's best friend is a gay man, or the gay romantic comedy, where the hero's best friend is a straight woman?"

• •

and no fortune and no steady income. How ghastly.

He can and will make money when he wants it and needs it. He won't put it first, that's all. Too much else comes first for him. Why should he put money first? I don't see why.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27. WHY HAVE I PERSISTED IN THE DELUSION THAT I COULD WIN HER LOVE (APPROVAL) TILL SUCH A LATE DATE? NOTHING I DO WILL CHANGE HER. DO I GRIEVE NOW BECAUSE I REALIZE THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THIS?

MAY 25, 1959. I now am in pain, and a grinding frustrated pain. Earlier in the morning, the sun, coming over the buildings in the east, caught and illuminated to a bright vivid glow the ivy, the new ivy, on the red brick wall of the garden below in Acorn Street. The leaves in Louisburg Square are so thick now I can only see the Greek togaed statue as a nobbed pale gray stone, with dapples of light and shadow. Dare I take another pill? If the pain would shut up; but then I'd be sicker.

Brains for supper last night. Ugh, I gag to think of it. I made them with a pungent wine sauce and they were ghastly. Even Ted couldn't eat all of them. Soft, flabby, obscene meat: food for mental invalids. Gah.

Another fresh May morning gone to hell, for no reason but this crampiness. If childbirth pangs are real, why aren't cramps real?

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10. Three poetry rejections this morning: *Paris Review*, *New Yorker*, and *Christian Science Monitor*. Notes, nice notes. The main thing being to send them out rapidly again. Just as I think: ah, I shall have no trouble getting these accepted, bang. Sent my book of poems, "The Devil of the Stairs" [an early title for "The Colossus"], off to Knopf on Monday, June 8th. How unpopular I am. Will send a bunch to *The Nation*. Well, have made *Sewanee*, *Partisan*, *Hudson* this year. And another two to *The New Yorker*.

Day in Winthrop, fishing. Cold. Caught two crabs (Ted did) and a skate, foul-lipped face on a flat fish. Came home with fifteen pounds of fresh cod thanks to a mustached, wooden-footed acquaintance of the sea who went out sixteen miles and came back with a boatful which he halved with us. Gulls hanging, voracious, tugging at the fish guts he tossed, wolfing a foot-long intestine in a few flying gulps. Crying, and hanging on the wind over our heads.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13. Drank tea, ate steak and fried potatoes about 10 P.M., the steak, of course, the first mealymouth steak we've got from DeLuca's. Read *Cosmopolitan* from cover to cover. Two mental-health articles. I must write one about a college-girl suicide. "The Day I Died."

And a story, a novel even. Must get out "Snake Pit" [an early title for "The Bell Jar"]. There is an increasing market for mental-hospital stuff. I am a fool if I don't relive, re-create it.

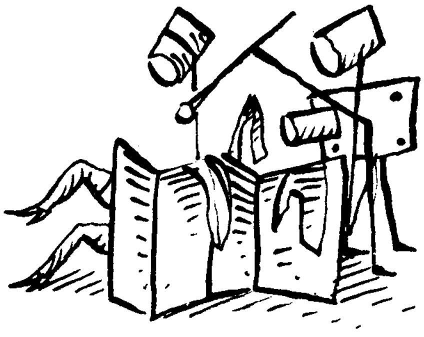
Mailmen below everywhere in the rain, in their short-sleeved light-blue shirts and prophetic hats. Oh, for a word, a transfiguring word. I regressed, but am getting back where my Self and my need to publicly affirm its Success Powers is melting out of my view, and the world, with my great curiosity in it, my need to observe, clinically, pain, sorrow, jealousy, conversation, is coming back, and I, that limiting blank wall, am irrelevant.

My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold a Mailman on the Street.

JANUARY 17, 1962. DEVON. The day of Nicholas's birth I woke with niggling cramps in the morning. Called Nurse D. [the midwife] as she had asked, but apologetically—the cramps seemed a small thing. I felt very calm and excited and eager, but surprised the rhythm of the birth and the order of things was so different from my time with Frieda [who was born in 1960]. All day the cramps kept up every half hour or so, fading and returning. I sat on a stool in a blank, limbo mood, impatient for the real thing to begin. Did some baking. Then, the moment Frieda was in bed, the cramps started in earnest. I waited for about two hours till the rhythm was established and the pains really strong enough for me to think I wanted gas and the nurse. She had told me to call "as soon as you feel: I wish Nurse Davies were here."

Nurse D. arrives about 9 P.M. I heard her little blue car drive into the court, and Ted helped her carry up all the heavy equipment. Immediately she set up the gas cylinder on a chair by my bed—a black suitcase-like box with a red cylinder of gas and air set in it, and a tube and mask which she showed me how to use by pressing my index finger in a hole and breathing when the pains came. She put on a white apron and a white head-scarf and sat on the right of the bed, and Ted on the left, and I held the mask, and we started in to gossip. It was wonderfully pleasant. Each time a pain came I breathed into the mask, listening to them talk, Nurse D. holding my hand till the pain was over. The room was warm, the red-lit Pifco purring, the night still and cold, the pink-and-white checked curtains drawn against it. I felt Nurse D. liked us both, and I felt perfectly delighted with her. Instead of the mindless crawling about and beating my head against the wall as with the worse cramps with Frieda, I felt perfectly in possession of myself, able to do something for myself. The cramps surprised me, they were very strong and kept on and on.

The time went on, the cramps went on. She advised us about a man to mow the long grass field. We talked of our hopes of cultivating the gardens and lawns at Court Green. Then she asked if I was ready to push. I wanted to be. But I wasn't. Finally, she looked and said I could, if I felt like it. I started to push, putting down the mask, which I didn't feel to need now I could get to work. My stomach mountained huge ahead of me, and, superstitiously, I shut my eyes, so I would feel and see from the inside—a horror of seeing the baby before Ted told me it was normal. I pushed. "My, you are a good pusher, the best pusher I've seen." I felt very proud. But after a while the nurse looked and told me I had better stop pushing for a bit—the baby's head had not descended far enough, the waters had not broken. I was dimly eager for the waters to break, grew worried as to why they had not, imagined the baby drowning up there. The minute I stopped pushing, the pains made themselves felt, awful, utterly twisting. At the same moment, I was aware that I seemed to be breathing only air in the mask, which I had taken up. The cylinder of gas had run out. There was no more. No more to be sent for, either, as the next day, Thursday, was the day Nurse D. collected her next allotment. I felt very upset at this. Ted and Nurse D. held my feet. Then I lost sense of time. Nurse D. told Ted to call Dr. Webb and tell him to come, the waters had not broken; he would give me a shot. I had a tearing pain in my left side that dwarfed the labor pains. Told them, in a dazed slow voice utterly possessed by the pain and the sight, glimpsed between lids opened for a split second, of my still frighteningly huge stomach, which did not seem to have altered during all the hours. Nurse D. looked very serious. Her face bent over me. Where? I knew she was worried. Ted called the doctor. I felt Nurse D. do something, I think she broke the membrane herself. There was a great gush: Oh, oh, oh, I heard myself say, as the awful pressure released itself and water came out and wet my back. Earlier she had got two ounces of urine out of me, after I first complained of the pain. I felt a huge black circular weight, like the end of a cannon or crowbar, pressing forward between my legs. I had my eyes squeezed shut and felt this black force blotting out my brain and utterly possessing me. A horrible fear it would split me and burst through me, leaving me in bloody shreds, but I could not help myself, it was too big for me. "It's too big, too big," I heard myself say. "Breathe easily, as if you were going to sleep," the nurse said. In a kind of vengeance, I dug my nails in her hand, as if this would save the terrible thing from tearing through me. I tried to breathe and not push, or let the thing push. But it did not diminish its pressure or go away.



Nurse D. gently unloosed my fingers. The black force grew imperceptibly. I felt panic-stricken—I had nothing to do with it, it controlled me. "I can't help it," I cried, or whispered, and then, in three great bursts, the black thing hurtled itself out of me, one, two, three, dragging three shrieks after it: Oh, Oh, Oh. A great wall of water seemed to come with it. "Here he is!" I heard Ted say. It was over. I felt the great weight gone in a moment. I felt thin, like air, as if I would float away, and perfectly awake. I lifted my head and looked up. "Did he tear me to bits?" I felt I must be ripped and bloody from all that power breaking out of me. "Not a scratch," said Nurse D. I couldn't believe it. I lifted my head and saw my first son, Nicholas Farrar Hughes, blue and glistening on the bed a foot from me, in a pool of wet, with a cross, black frown and oddly low, angry brow, looking up at me, frown wrinkles between his eyes, and his blue scrotum and penis large and blue, as if carved on a totem. Ted was pulling back the wet sheets and Nurse D. mopping up the great amounts of water that had come with him.

Then the nurse wrapped the baby up and put him in my arms. Dr. Webb arrived. It had happened at five minutes to midnight. The clock struck twelve. The baby squirmed and cried, warm in the crook of my arm. Dr. Webb put his fingers digging into my stomach and told me to cough. The afterbirth flew out into a Pyrex bowl; which crimsoned with blood. It was whole. We had a son. I felt no surge of love. I wasn't sure I liked him. His head bothered me, the low brow. Later Dr. Webb told me his forehead had probably caught or crowned on my pelvic bone and kept him from coming. The baby weighed 9 pounds 11 ounces—that was why he had been so long. Frieda was only 7 pounds 4 ounces. I felt immensely proud. The nurse liked him. She tidied up after the doctor left, changing the bed, piling up the dirty linen, sorting out the bloody things to be soaked in cold water and salt in the tub. Everything was beautiful and neat and calm. The baby washed and dressed in his carrycot, so silent I had Ted get up and make sure he was breathing. The nurse said good night. It felt like Christmas Eve, full of rightness and promise. ♦

FICTION

TAKING PICTURES

BY ANNE ENRIGHT

Words spoil it. They make it sound silly.

When he showed me the ring, I just laughed. I don't know what it is to be in love, even less to be married. I thought, What can I say? I wanted to bury his head in my coat. I wanted to wrap my coat around him and tuck him under my arm. Except that he is so big.

"So what brought this on?" said Sarah at work—the bitch.

"Just," I said.

"Just," she said. "You're *just* getting married."

Later—drunk, of course—she leans back in her chair and says, "So he's into pain then, is he?"

"Well, obviously." But in my head later, for days later, I'm saying, "He is not even interested in pain, Sarah. He will not have it in the room."

Some nights I stay at his place, and some nights we stay back at mine. All this moving around makes us impatient, with the multiplying toothbrushes and a permanent pair of knickers, clean or worn, at the bottom of my bag. But I still don't know what it is to be in love. I know it is different from being married. But, just for now, married seems to me to be more. And less, of course. But mostly more.

Sarah at work, I can't stop believing in Sarah at work, just because I am getting married, just because she is jealous. Here is a description of Sarah. She is a washed-out sort of strawberry blonde with fine bones and small features. She is fading to white. She is constantly insulted by men.

Back at his place, I bite my fiancé on the ear. Sometimes I come up behind him and chew at the muscles of his back. Or when he is sitting down I worry my teeth inside his thigh, along the seam of his jeans. If I hurt him, he reads the paper. If he laughs, we go to bed. Or more often do not go to bed but rumble awhile and then talk. He likes to spoon. He likes to go to bed after it is all over. Which is lovely. Which is always a little bit more.

So Sarah at work has a personality problem. Which is to say, her problem is that she does not like other people's personalities.

My mother had a friend who was always too much, and very clever. I know these things can last a lifetime, so I am careful of Sarah, and careful of my man—too careful to use his name with her. Despite which I end up saying it all the time. "Oh, *Frank*," I say. "Frank says this." "Frank doesn't like that."

"Oh, really?" says Sarah.

She is seeing a guy herself—sort of. He isn't married, he isn't with someone else, but there is a problem, I can tell—a sick mother, maybe, or even a child. The only thing Sarah will say is "The fucker won't do Saturdays." Maybe he's a bisexual. Sarah has no breasts, truth be told. And you can't win with a bisexual, I say, because bisexuals can't lose.

Of course, I don't say it out loud. Sarah is the witty one. At the time, I just look at her skinny little chest, and think.

We are going over the wedding list for the fourteenth time. I pause over Sarah's name, and Frank says, "Don't invite her then, if you don't like her. Just leave her out."

And I say, "I can't leave her out."

"Why not?"

"Because it's Sarah," I say. "Because it just doesn't work that way."

The wedding is only four months away. I have a feeling that something massive is going to hit me. I feel like I have been fighting in the surf all my life. Now, out beyond the last, the biggest wave, there is open sea.

I tell Sarah about the dress I tried on over the weekend.

"White, is it?"

"Cream, actually."

"Sounds lovely."

"*Sar*-ah!" I say. We have nipped out for a coffee. Something has to break.

"Sarah what?"

"Just stop it. All right?"

And then, because she is Sarah, she changes the subject, makes me laugh about Gary in Security's hairy neck. I talk about my sister's children while she sprinkles the table with sugar and draws her finger through it, and then she asks about the dress. Seriously this time.

Apparently, I can't do a dropped waist. I'll have to get on a sun bed *now*, and go for white.

Once when she was drunk she said, "You know your problem? You'll be all right. That's your fucking tragedy, you know that? You'll always be all right."

But I don't feel all right, Sarah. Just because I don't make a song and dance about it. Doesn't mean I'm always, or even sometimes, *all right*. You know?

"I just wanted to get married," says Frank.

"Profiteroles," I say, "or chocolate mousse. It's just a decision. A stupid decision, that's all."

But there is an extraordinary thing happening in bed. As if he wants to wreck us both, sink to the bottom, while all the invitations and profiteroles and satin shoes wash up on shore.

And because I am more miserable about Sarah all the time, because I think she will spoil everything, like the bad fairy at the christening, he says, "Bring her over. All the two of you do is get hammered and miserable. I'll cook. Bring her over."

We don't just get hammered, we have a laugh. And we talk, too. We talk about lots of things. But when I ask her to dinner it feels odd. And somehow, because I am getting married, the bisexual boyfriend has to come, too.

Frank's flat is better than mine for these things. He has a big living room, split by a kitchen counter, and a table of a decent size. I put candles on the table and on top of the TV. By the time I'm finished cleaning, Frank has all the vegetables on different plates, chopped up and ready to go.

Sarah turns up before it gets dark. She moves sort of sideways and looks at things in the room, picking up an old birthday card, a list of messages, and then Frank's tax certificate, which she puts back down again. She is wearing black, and jewelry. I feel I should change to put her at ease, but it's too late now.

ANDREA ARTZ, "UNTITLED" (1998)

Frank has a dish of olives on the table, but she will not eat them. Like it's all a bit hilarious. When she walked in the door, she said "Kisses!" as if she had known him for years. But she still hasn't looked at him. She picks at scraps of paper and touches things. She checks her watch.

"So, married bliss, Frank," she says.

"Yeah," says Frank.

"What do you mean, 'Yeah'?"

"Well it's . . . I don't know," says Frank. "It's such a production." And she gives me an arch look while his back is turned. He comes over to the table with the dips and cut bread. She looks at him then. She gives him a good look, and her eyes falter.

He puts the food on the table. "Isn't he a treasure?" she says, and I don't want Frank to cook anymore. It makes him look silly. I follow him to the kitchen counter, and "Ack ack ack!" he says, swiping my hand away from all the vegetables, in their neat rows.

"So, honeybunch," I say, "when's this guy of yours going to show?"

At dinner we talk about sex. Everyone is drunk quite quickly, except maybe Frank, who is worried about the food. But when it is all served up, he goes, too. Wham. There are two red blotches flaring over his cheeks from the side of his nose. Sarah's man sits all hunched over and bundled up in a T-shirt and a knitted thing and a jacket that he won't take off, so I can't tell what his body is like, but his hands are very small and unpleasant. He reaches onto his plate and dips into the food with glistening fingertips.

So, his name is Fiach. He works part time for his father and he takes photographs and he wants to get into advertising but more like short films, blah blah, you know the type. When he turns his head, you can see the tail end of a tattoo coming out from under his hair.

But it seems that Sarah is mad about him. She looks at him with her entire face, then she gets embarrassed and looks down at her plate. I wonder what he does to her in bed, or makes her do.

And then we are all talking at once. I say that the real porn on the Internet is the property pages from France. A house in the Auvergne for fourteen grand, that's the real porn, and Sarah is trying to tell her hitchhiking story from Italy, and Fiach is talking about the first porn shop he went into in London, where the women in the magazines were like housewives, all trussed up with clothes pegs and Marigold gloves.

Amazing. We are people who have sex. Frank fills the glasses and I see it all stretching out ahead of me. Couples. I look at the rest of my life and despair.

Now everyone is excited, jumping in with a story, a thing, a tic—politicians who put things up their bottoms, and the one about the lesbian journalists, and then some film star who took a shit, literally, on a beautiful black woman, this last from Sarah.

"Oh, come on," says Frank.

"Come on what?"

"It's just because she's black."

"Well, exactly."

"I mean the *story* is just because she's black."

"Oh, Frank," says Sarah. "Oh, you poor boy," and she squeezes his forearm.

Frank gets up then and goes to the counter, and there is a pause around the table. He swings around with the coffee cups and says to Fiach, "I was looking for a camera in the duty-free last month, but it's all gizmos and autofocus. Like for thicks."

Sarah snorts into her glass of wine. Then she just keeps laughing. Fiach looks at her and says, "Don't fucking bother. I started with a second-hand Olympus. Bog basic. Lovely thing."

"Olympus," says Frank, but before Fiach can turn away from her Sarah says, "Fiach likes taking pictures. Don't you, Fiach?"

Then it is her turn to get up. She leaves the room and the two boys talk on about cameras and she doesn't come back. I think she's left the flat, I think she's in the other room doing something dreadful, something I can't even imagine. I try to think of what it might be, but whatever comes to mind isn't really dreadful, after all.

Still, the air of it is in the room, the feel of something appalling, until Sarah comes back with her hair brushed and the eyeliner wiped away from under her left eye. She sees us looking, sweeps up her drink, and decides to dance. Glass in one hand, she waves the other in the air. The skin of her underarm is dark and stained, and not particularly strawberry blond.

I say, "Sarah."

"What?"

But, as if she guesses, she lowers her arm, shimmies over, and hooks her finger into the neck of Fiach's T-shirt. She smiles close into his face. Then she gives up and slumps back into her seat.

"Oh, for fuck's sake," she says. "Let's go somewhere. Let's go for a bop." Which is when Frank brings out the brandy, still talking to Fiach about lenses, and I ask Sarah about her mother. Sarah hates her mother, though it is her father who is the manic-depressive, probably. But it is the father she loves and the mother she despises, so we talk about this for a while. Then I tell her about Mammy taking the bottle out of the wardrobe and saying "Well, at least I'm not drinking anymore" as she pours herself another vodka. But it is an old conversation. It doesn't work anymore. It is time to go—or would be if Sarah weren't so drunk. She leans back and looks at the boys and tests the edge of her front teeth with her tongue.

"Fiach," she says.

"What?"

On the other side of the table, Fiach is talking about some kind of goose. He says he goes to Bull Island every Saturday to take pictures of this goose. He is throwing it out like it's a sort of trendy thing to do, but he's also actually started listing the names of gulls and terns, and Frank is looking at him with a face like setting concrete. I think he's too astonished or too bored to speak, but then I see that he is completely interested, that he is nine years old.

"Maybe Fiach could do the wedding pictures," I say, but no one is listening. Fiach is on to curlews now. He seems to be talking about their feet.

"I said, maybe Fiach can do the wedding, Frank."

Beside me, Sarah is trying to set her drink on fire. She has the lighter pushed down into the glass and she's flicking the wheel. When the spark catches, she pulls back in fright and the glass falls over. The flaming brandy licks out across the table.

For a moment, all four of us watch the flames spill across the wood. Frank lifts his napkin but does not bring it down. The fire is such a beautiful blue. It gathers the air and loses it, drinking it, slurping it up. Fiach pulls his chair back as a rivulet of flame drips over the edge of the table and lands on the floor. Then I pick up a bottle of water and put it all out.

Sarah is silent in the bedroom, putting on her coat. Then she turns to say that she is delighted. Of course, she said it when I first showed her the ring—with a big fake scream like the rest of them—but now she says it properly, she takes both my arms and says she is just delighted, just so pleased. She says that Frank is just so brilliant.

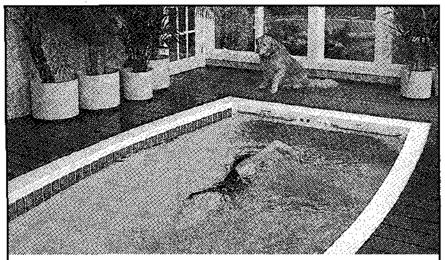
"Thanks," I say. "Oh, Jesus, Sarah, I'm scared."

We hug then, and I show her back into the big room. After they are gone, I go over to the stereo, turn it up, and start to dance. I swing my backside. I sit down on the air and then push up into it. I say, "Fuck you, Sarah. Hey, fuck you," pushing up with my joke penis made of air.

Frank sits on the sofa and looks at me. Then he closes his eyes and seems to sleep. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!
From Our Town (N.Y.)

"I've spent a lot of time in the subways," said Sliwa. "It's a dark and dank experience. You feel morbid. The environment contributes to the fear that develops in men and women. The moment that you walk into the bowels of the armpit of the cesspool of crime, you immediately cringe."



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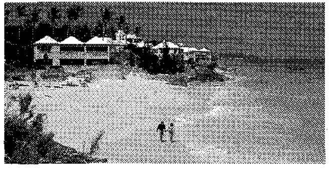

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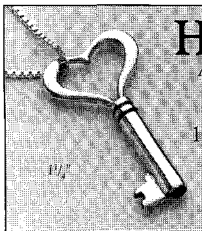

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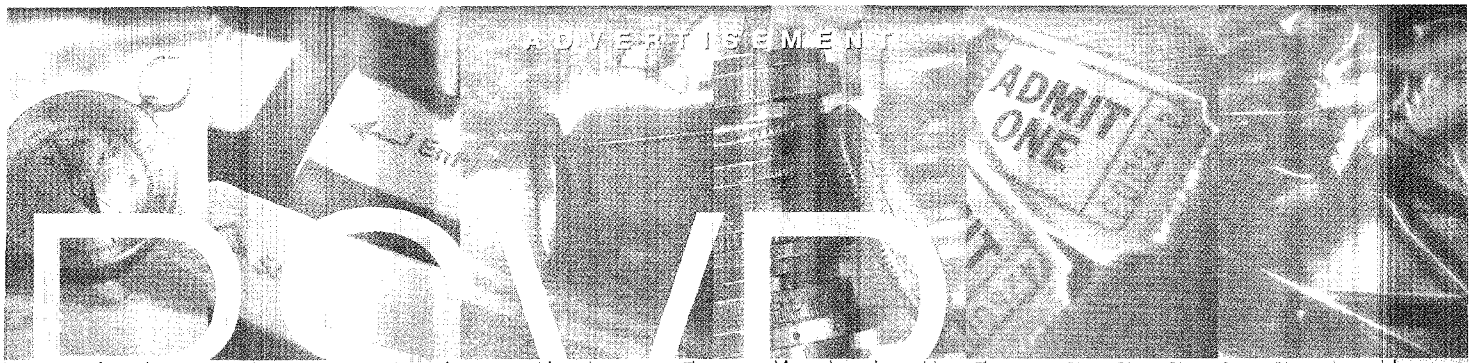

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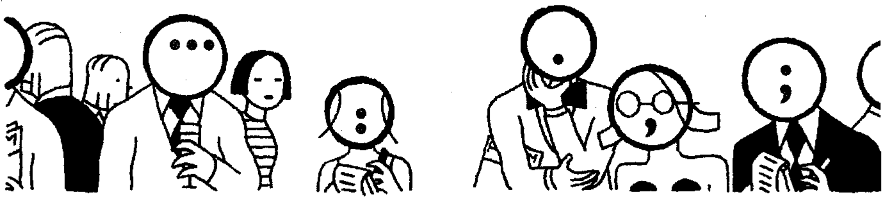


EDWARD SOREL

THE THEATRE

THE VICIOUS CAMPFIRE

Talking trash with Shepard and Mamet.

BY JOHN LAHR

> Without this we're just savage shitheads in the wilderness. . . . Sitting around some vicious campfire.—*Teach, "American Buffalo."*

When Walt Whitman surveyed the American republic, in his 1871 essay "Democratic Vistas," he described it as a vast, well-endowed body "with little or no soul." Emptiness had already become as defining a by-product of American abundance as the good life, and Whitman's poems were intended to be an antidote to the malaise of materialism, a "tremendous force-infusion" of spirit. Unfortunately, Whitman's strong medicine couldn't remedy capitalism's fever, which, in his eyes, turned democracy's great experiment into a great debacle—"cankered, crude, superstitious and rotten," in which the "depravity of the business classes . . . is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater." The pioneer Americans had been made barbarous by the lawless frontier; now, as Whitman saw, modern Americans were being made barbarous by the laws of the free market. These twin wildernesses are brought hilariously together in Sam Shepard's "True West" (written in 1980 and now given a thrilling revival by the director Matthew Warchus at the Circle in the Square).

In the daring long pause that begins the play, the sounds of the Los Angeles night, its crickets and coyotes, compete with a sulfurous silence between two brothers, Lee and Austin, who face off in their mother's tidy modern kitchen. With his jeans, crude tattoos, and cowboy boots, Lee (the craggy, brilliant John C. Reilly), who has rolled up on his mother's doorstep after some months in the desert, is an intrusive, beer-swilling outlaw whose only expertise seems to be in breaking and entering. The nervy Austin (played by the incomparable interpreter of introverted fury Philip Seymour Hoffman) is a put-upon Ivy League screenwriter with a Hollywood movie to pitch and the responsibility of house-sitting his mother's plants while she vacations in Alaska. Out of this clash of personalities and life chances, Shepard spins a droll tall tale of sibling rivalry. In the brothers' rootless isolation, the play traps a deeper spiritual atrophy in the land and, incidentally, also acts out Shepard's own fierce division between the claims of success and rebellion.

"True West" avoids the tangle of pretension and obfuscation that mars so much of Shepard's work; it's an appealingly modest play, which skillfully translates psychology into behavior—in this case, the murderous, spoiling work of envy. "I mean you never had any more on the ball than I did," Lee tells his brother, early in the play. "But here you are gettin' invited into prominent people's houses. Sittin' around talkin' like you know somethin'." Jealousy is eating Lee alive, but Austin won't bite. "Well, you invite yourself," he says. Later, when Lee ponders the local suburban homes he's cased, his coruscating sense of inferiority surfaces again. "Kinda' place that sorta' kills ya' inside," Lee says, of the affluent furnishings. "Kinda' place you wish you sorta' grew up in, ya' know."

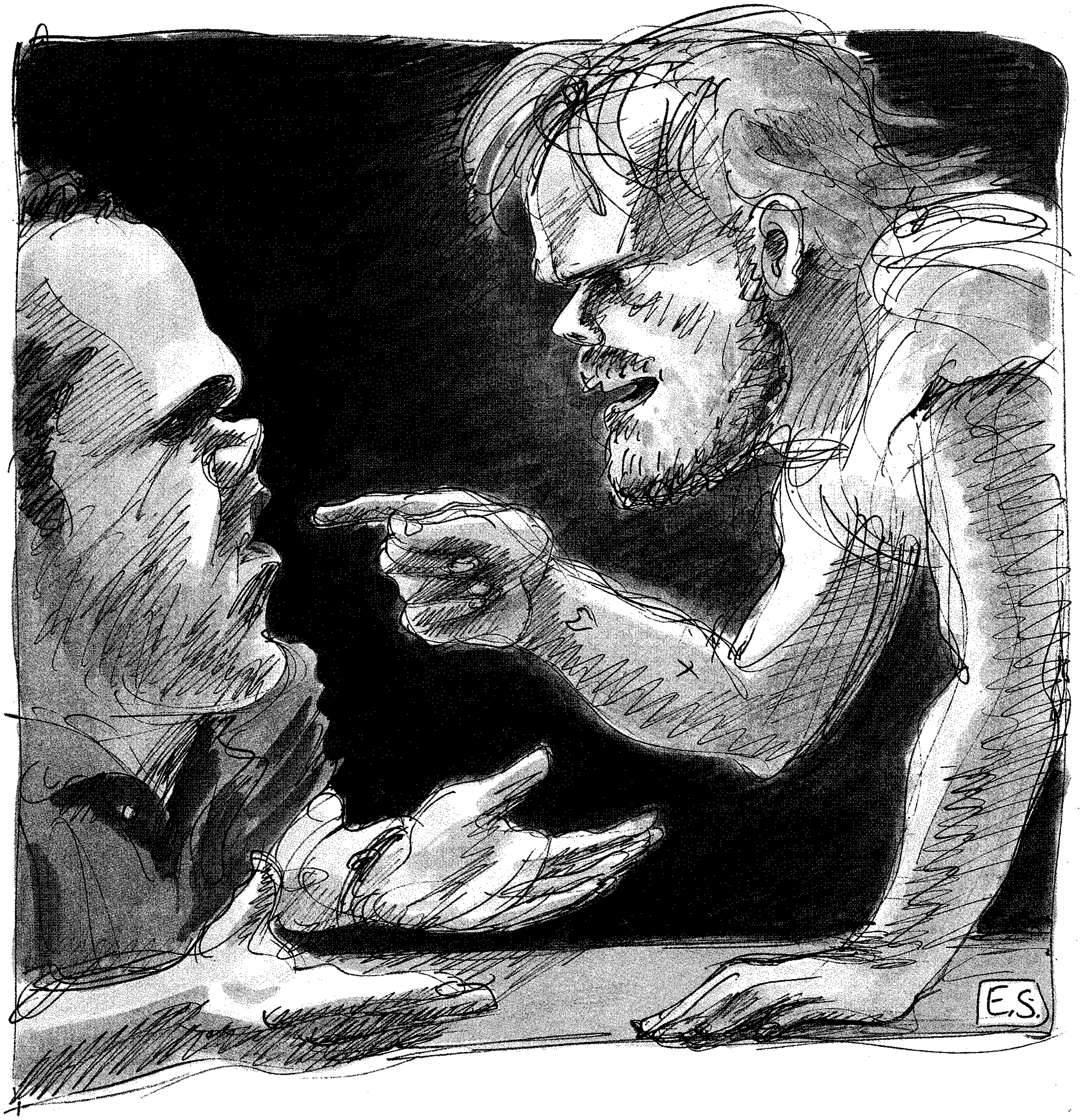
Reilly's roaring and Hoffman's repressed hostility make for a wonderful contrast and a satisfyingly equal battle of wills. (For half the run, the actors switch roles; then Hoffman's derelict eyes, slurred sea-dog voice, and preternatural comic skills make the contest entertaining but lopsided.) But all of this is only Shepard's shrewdly engineered preamble. Before the end of the first act, Lee's envy will have achieved its violent mission. At first, Lee goes after, and gets, Austin's car; next, he befriends Austin's producer (the clever Robert Lupone, in a robin's-egg-blue suit and white loafers); then he's writing his own screen treatment, and, before you can say "It's a wrap," Lee's terrible movie idea has superseded Austin's in the producer's dead heart. Austin's deal, his livelihood, ultimately even his billing, are appropriated by Lee.

By the second act, the brothers' roles have completely reversed: Austin is the drunk slumped in the kitchen, singing "Red Sails in the Sunset" and lobbing bitter zingers at his brother, who pecks away at the typewriter. "I don't want my name on that piece of shit," Austin says. "I want something of value. . . . You got any tidbits from the desert?" The thought crosses Austin's befuddled mind that if Lee can do his job, then he can do Lee's. "You couldn't steal a toaster without losin' yer lunch," Lee brays, pulling ribbon out of the typewriter as if it were fishing line.

When the lights come up on the two brothers in the next scene, Austin is burnishing one of a dozen newly acquired toasters ("There's gonna' be a general lack of toast in the neighborhood this morning," he says); meanwhile, in the foreground, Lee is taking out his writer's block on the typewriter, smashing it to smithereens with a nine-iron. Here, Shepard is at his best: loose, intuitive, his dialogue rippling with subtle shifts of mood and ideas. In this impeccably staged piece of slapstick, while Reilly tears up the dining alcove looking for a pencil, Hoffman pads behind him, priming his toasters with white bread and talking about going back to the desert with Lee. "There's nothing real down here, Lee! Least of all me!" he says. The frenzy builds to a sidesplitting, infantile epiphany. Lee knocks the toast out of Austin's hand, then, as Austin drops to his hands and knees to pick it up, grinds each slice into the floor.

The brothers' mayhem is topped only by the detachment of their mother (the excellent Celia Weston, in an appropriately misjudged turquoise suit), who doesn't bat an eyelash at the havoc in her house when she returns early from her trip. She surveys the devastation, then crosses to the refrigerator, where she realigns the fruit magnets on the door as Austin rolls at her feet, strangling Lee. "You're not killing him, are you?" she asks, before deciding to decamp to a motel. "Stay here, Mom," Austin pleads, hunkered over Lee's body. "This is where you live." She looks around the stage and offers a judgment that plays like a familiar Shepard jeremiad about America. "I don't recognize it at all," she says. At the finale, Lee appears to be dead, but, as Austin makes a move to leave, he jumps to his feet. The play ends with the haunting final image of a murderous standoff between blessing and barbarity.

Where "True West" is a minor play brilliantly cast, Neil Pepe's production of David Mamet's "American Buffalo" (at the Atlantic Theatre Company) is a great play in which the actors' chemistry never quite fills out the humiliated hearts of their characters. Like Shepard's, Mamet's furious, self-loathing personalities are products of the envy—what Veblen called "invidious comparison"—generated by America's competitive sweepstakes. "Action talks and bullshit walks," a junk-shop owner named Don (Philip Baker Hall) says in the play's opening beats, as he tutors his young junkie gofer, Bobby (the poignant, baby-faced Mark Webber). The joke and the tragedy is that the denizens of Don's shop are stalled; although they ape the postures and epithets of big business, they



John C. Reilly and Philip Seymour Hoffman in Sam Shepard's droll tall tale of sibling rivalry.

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are, like the junk around them, the detritus of free enterprise. "You know what is free enterprise?" asks Teach, a petty criminal (played by the expert William H. Macy) who kisses himself in on a scam to steal back a nickel for which some dealer has paid Don ninety dollars. "The freedom . . . of the Individual . . . to Embark on Any Fucking Course that he sees fit . . . in order to secure his honest chance to make a profit."

From the moment Teach enters—on a wave of gorgeous invective at being dissed by "fuckin' Ruthie" at the local diner—the sludge of his fierce talk mirrors a mind savaged by the barren world that bred him. "Only, and I'm not, I don't think, casting anything on anyone: from the mouth of a Southern bulldyke asshole ingrate of a vicious nowhere cunt can this trash come," he fumes. The characters in "American Buffalo" can't define their feelings because they don't have the words. It's Mamet's awesome achievement to at once show and comment on these despoiled minds, who are given to saying things like "Blah blah blah" and "The whatchamacallit is always the last to know." They talk of making a killing, but it's they who are dying. In one well-staged moment, when the heist falls through, Teach trashes the shop in a violent frenzy with a pigsticker. "I go out there," he says. "I'm out there every day. [*Pause.*] There is nothing out there. [*Pause.*] I fuck myself."

Macy's performance as Teach has grown in ferocity as the production has journeyed from a sold-out London run to New York. But Macy, who was a student of Mamet's, and who played Bobby when "American Buffalo" débuted in Chicago in 1975, is so alert and so spiffy in his gray suit and tasselled loafers that Teach's desperate vacancy is never quite clear or clinched. Both he and Kevin Rigdon's set are too tidy and too contained, and this mutes the play's sense of impoverishment. Still, the exhilaration of Mamet's pitch-perfect dialogue, the depth of both his characterization and his sense of the corroded social fabric, the wild humor and the sadness in the threadbare world he so completely imagines, are some kind of theatrical miracle. If there is a better comedy about American business and the nation's lost soul, I don't know it. Neil Pepe's production is lucid if not inspired; the play itself is for the ages. ♦

BOOKS

ALL TOGETHER NOW

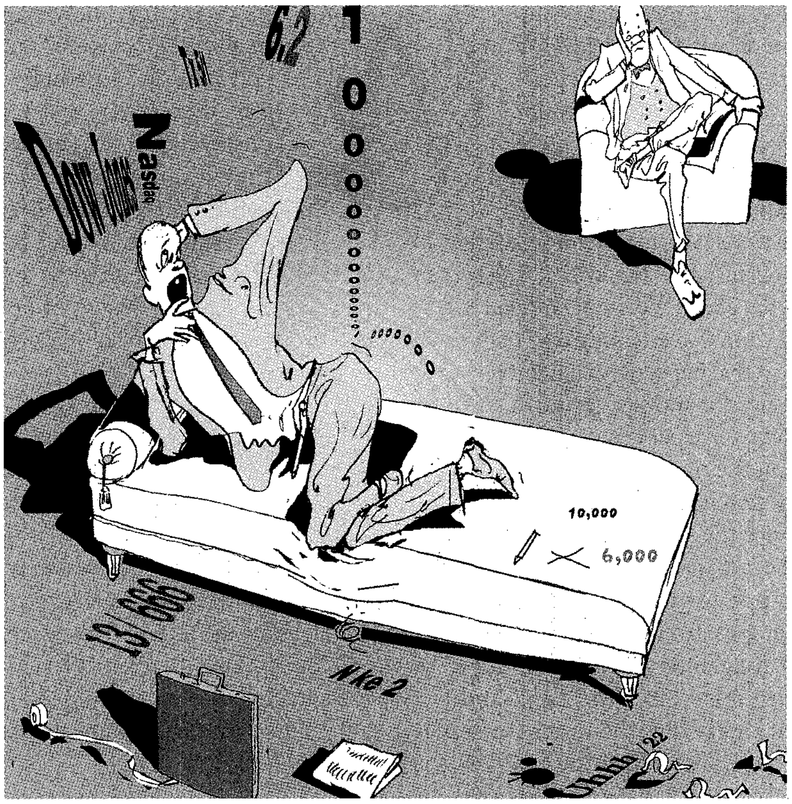
New theories on why we can't stay out of the stock market.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

In late 1996, Robert Shiller, a fifty-three-year-old Yale economist who specializes in the study of financial markets, was invited to address Alan Greenspan and his fellow-governors on the Federal Reserve Board. Shiller went down to Washington with John Campbell, his frequent collaborator and former student, who now teaches at Harvard. They handed out a set of charts suggesting that the Dow Jones averages, which were then trading at about 6,400, were wildly overvalued. Greenspan didn't say much during the presentation, but afterward, at lunch, Shiller asked him when a Fed chairman had last suggested that the stock market was too high. A senior official, not Greenspan, replied that it was William McChesney Martin, Jr., in 1965. A couple of days later, Shiller was back in New Haven driving his son to school when he heard on the radio that bourses around the world were falling sharply following a speech in which Greenspan had raised the question of whether "irrational exuberance has unduly escalated" stock prices. Shiller was taken aback. "I thought, Oh my God, I might be behind that," he told me when I visited him at his office on the Yale campus a month ago.

The stock market's dive proved temporary, of course, and the Dow quickly resumed its vertiginous climb. On the day I visited New Haven, it was perched at 10,304.89. Greenspan never repeated the phrase "irrational exuberance," although it remains firmly associated with him, but Shiller borrowed it for the title of a new book in which he details his argument that "the high recent valuations in the U.S. stock market have come about for no good reason." In view of the renewed tremors on Wall Street, "Irrational Exuberance" (Princeton; $27.95) has been rushed to press.

Shiller could be dismissed as the latest in a long line of misguided Cassandras (full disclosure: I am one of the many others), but that would be unfair. During the past decade, he has emerged as a leader in the new field of "behavioral finance," which seeks to apply lessons learned from other academic disciplines, particularly psychology, to economics. "Irrational Exuberance" is not just a prophecy of doom. Encompassing history, sociology, and biology, as well as psychology and economics, it is a serious attempt to explain how speculative bubbles come about and how they sustain themselves. And while Shiller's arguments aren't always convincing, they are challenging.

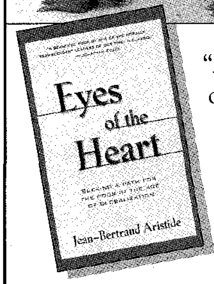


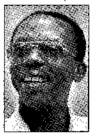
Robert Shiller uses many factors, especially psychology, to explain investors' behavior.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Shiller, who earned his doctorate at M.I.T. in the early seventies and taught at Minnesota and Penn before moving to Yale in 1982, identifies three sets of precipitating factors behind the recent behavior of stock prices: structural, cultural, and psychological. The thread running through his analysis is the idea that investors are not acting the way standard economic theory assumes they do—as rational, well-informed calculating machines who look at all the available information, come to an objective assessment of how much companies are worth, and direct their money accordingly. On the contrary. Shiller writes, "The market is high because of the combined effect of indifferent thinking by millions of people, very few of whom feel the need to perform careful research on the long-term investment value of the aggregate stock market, and who are motivated substantially by their own emotions, random attentions, and perceptions of conventional wisdom." I asked Shiller, whose long, pale face and shock of side-parted gray-brown hair make him resemble a younger George Plimpton, if he was suggesting that people are stupid. "People are not stupid," he replied. "But they have their limitations."

In looking at the stock market, Shiller argues, many people seek "quantitative anchors" to give them an idea of whether current prices represent good value. They often refer to the price level they





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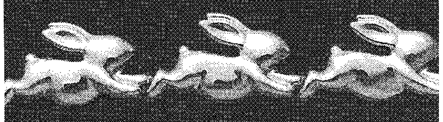

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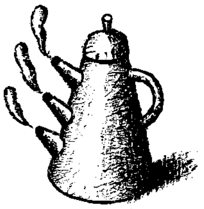
most recently remember, or to the most recent market milestone, such as 10,000 on the Dow. Of course, the fact that the Dow was at 10,000 yesterday doesn't tell us much at all about where it will be next year, let alone in ten years, but Shiller cites experimental evidence from two psychologists, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, which suggests that people making choices in all sorts of situations, not just investing, tend to be influenced by whatever number is at hand. Tversky and Kahneman set up a fortune wheel marked with numbers from one to a hundred, then assembled groups of people and asked them questions like what percentage of countries in the United Nations were African. Before each group gave an answer, Tversky and Kahneman spun the wheel. When it stopped at ten, the group gave a median answer of twenty-five per cent; when it stopped at sixty-five for another group, the median was forty-five per cent. (The correct answer, at the time of the experiment, was thirty-two per cent.)



Since the stock market's astonishing rise began, in 1982, many reasons have been put forward to account for it. Shiller lists twelve, including the ones most frequently cited: the collapse of Communism and the hegemony of global capitalism, the demise of inflation, the aging of the baby boomers, the growth of 401(k) pension plans and mutual funds, and the arrival of the Internet. None of these impress him, but the last one really irks him, because it confuses technology with economics. "People imagine that companies have a monopoly on the Internet, but they don't," he told me. "The Internet is available to everybody. If you could buy a patent on the Internet, you could be fabulously rich, but that's not what we have."

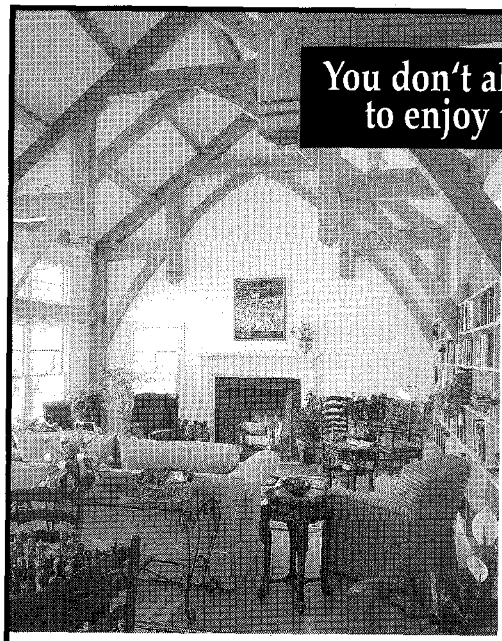
Shiller's knowledge of E-commerce isn't entirely academic. Besides teaching at Yale, he is a co-owner of Case Shiller Weiss, an economic-research firm that, among other things, provides estimates of average real-estate prices by Zip Code. Lots of people are telling him to rename the company with a dot-com suffix and issue stock through an initial public offering, but Shiller is reluctant to join the on-line entrepreneurs rushing to cash out. "The Internet craze is causing distortions," he said. "People are starting up little dot-com companies even though they don't personally think they're going to work. They don't care. They're just looking to sell them. This process is obviously wasteful." The notion that the Internet may be diverting valuable resources, human and physical, to worthless pursuits is not one that appears regularly in the business sections, still less on the nightly news. To Shiller, this is no accident. "Although the news media—newspapers, magazines, broadcast media, and now the Internet—present themselves as detached observers of market events, they are themselves an integral part of these events," he writes. "Significant market events generally occur only if there is similar thinking among large groups of people, and the news media are essential vehicles for the spread of ideas."

This case is hard to argue with. A lot of business journalism is mere cheerleading for the market. CNBC, with its endless procession of "expert" stock tippers, is one of the worst offenders. Journalists at CNBC and elsewhere would no doubt claim that they are just reporting the news and letting the viewers decide, but Shiller disagrees. "I view the stock-market rise as an epidemic," he said. "The media change the contagion rate."

Many investors, perhaps most of them, think that the market will keep going up simply because it has done so recently. The assumption that the future will resemble the past is an extremely common one, known to psychologists as the "representativeness heuristic," and it tends to give people the idea that they can predict the future. "Without such overconfidence, one would think there would be little trading in financial markets," Shiller writes. "If people were completely rational, then half the investors should think they are below average in their trading ability and should therefore be unwilling to do speculative trades with the other half, who they think will probably dominate them in trading. Thus, the above-average half would have no one to trade with." With more than two billion shares changing hands every day on Wall Street, there is no shortage of people to trade with. In fact, one of the most remarkable things about the last few years is that many so-called smart investors, such as Warren Buffett and George Soros, have been among the most reluctant to place their money in the stock market, and have fared relatively poorly as a result, while retirees and college kids from Maine to San Diego have been pouring every dollar they have, and more, into their Fidelity and Schwab accounts, and doing very well. A possible explanation for this dichotomy—and one subscribed to by many CNBC guests—is that old-timers like Buffett and Soros simply "don't get it." Another possible explanation, one favored by Shiller and many of his fellow-economists, is that investors are acting like sheep, or cattle—they are succumbing to herd behavior.

In recent years, economists have developed a number of elaborate mathematical models showing how rational, or near-rational, thinking can produce such behavior. Shiller offers the example of two restaurants that open next door to each other. The first customer who arrives doesn't know which is better, so he picks one and hopes for the best. A few minutes later, the next customer arrives. He doesn't know which is better either, but seeing one person eating in the first restaurant and nobody in the second, he chooses the first. When the third customer shows up, he sees two people in one restaurant and none in the other, and he, too, goes to the popular place. The selection process continues in this way, and most customers wind up eating at the same restaurant, even though the other one may serve better food.

This is what economists call an "information cascade," and they have used the theory to explain trends in areas as diverse as fashion, politics, and the movie industry. In applying it to the stock market, Shiller writes, "the popular notion that the level of market prices is the outcome of a sort of vote by all investors about the true value of the market is just plain wrong. Hardly anybody is really voting. Instead people are rationally choosing not to, as they see it, waste their time and effort in exercising their judgment about the market, and thus choosing not to exert any independent impact on the market." When I asked Shiller about this argument, he came up with



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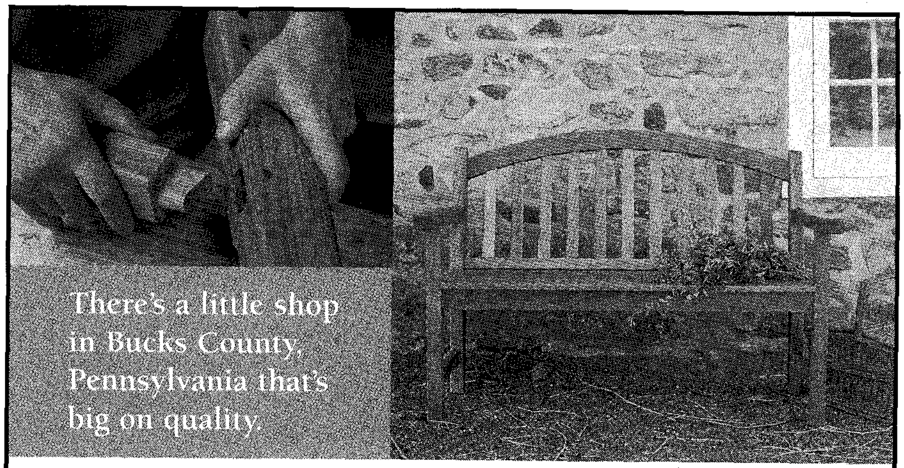

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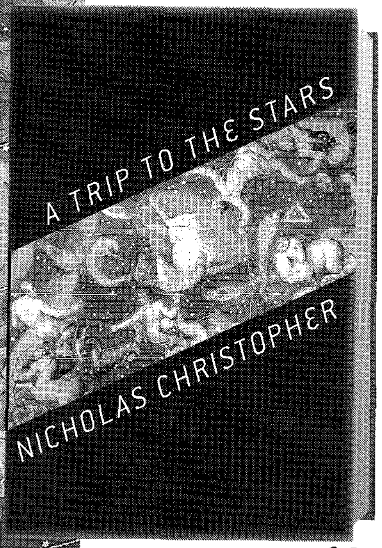

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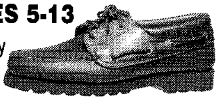

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the following analogy: "Investors are looking at various people who put themselves forward as experts, and they are saying, 'Which of these people seems to know?' They are not trying to figure out the arguments themselves, and that seems a pretty rational way to behave. You don't immerse yourself in theoretical physics—you just get on the plane. The problem is that physicists agree a lot more than economists."

The investors' tendency to run in packs is encouraged, of course, by the fact that, as long as they stick together and avoid the temptation to sell, they are often rewarded by higher prices. Such a "positive feedback" effect is present in almost all self-reinforcing processes. Shiller skates over this idea, but it is central to the stock-market boom. He cites a poll published by *Barron's* in May of last year which found that seventy-two per cent of money managers believe the stock market is in a speculative bubble. This is a truly remarkable finding. It suggests that the vast majority of professional investors are well aware that current stock prices make no sense, but they keep buying anyway. Why would they do such a thing? Because of the way in which they are paid. In most cases, a fund manager's performance (and remuneration) is measured not in absolute terms but relative to the performance of other people who manage similar funds. If he (or she) turns bearish and everybody else remains bullish, he is likely to be fired for underperforming. If, on the other hand, he stays bullish and the market falls, he will be in the same sinking boat as everybody else, and he will probably survive.

In this environment, the key to success is to guess what everybody else is going to do next—dump blue chips, buy technology stocks—and nip in ahead of them. This is the famous beauty-contest theory of investment promulgated by John Maynard Keynes. According to Keynes, who managed his substantial portfolio each morning while he was still in bed, the best guide to investing was the competitions that popular British newspapers used to run in which readers were presented with dozens of pictures of pretty girls and were asked to vote for the six most beautiful, with the prize going to the person whose choice corresponded most closely with the average choices of the entrants as a whole. In "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money," Keynes wrote, "It is not a case of choosing those which, to the best of one's judgement, are really the prettiest, nor even those which average opinion genuinely thinks the prettiest. We have reached the third degree where we devote our intelligences to anticipating what average opinion expects the average opinion to be. And there are some, I believe, who practise the fourth, fifth and higher degrees."

Shiller doesn't mention Keynes, but his own arguments should still give pause to anyone who has money in the stock market. A couple of years ago, Shiller and Campbell published a paper in an academic journal which implied that the Dow, if it were to revert to historical norms, would at some point fall to 6,000. That calculation doesn't appear in Shiller's book, but he didn't shy away from the 6,000 figure when I brought it up. "I think that's a good prospect, but I don't want to be overconfident about it," he said. "I didn't want to play the game of making some dramatic forecast and hoping it's right." I thought that was a shrewd answer, but I couldn't resist asking Shiller about predictions from more bullish economists that the Dow will reach 20,000, or 36,000, in the next ten or twenty years. "It is very plausible to me that in the year 2020 it will still be at 10,000," he said. Then, smiling ruefully, he added, "It will probably be below that at some point. Maybe tomorrow." It was about two weeks later, actually, that the Dow fell, but then it rebounded, as it has done so many times before, as investors followed a thousand pundits' advice to "buy on the dips." Shiller says the tendency to purchase more stocks when the market falls is now so deeply ingrained that it's instinctive, like taking your foot off the gas pedal and grabbing the wheel when you hit an icy patch on the road. "We've seen the market go down and come back up so many times, very much like we've experienced driving a car," he told me. "There's just a gut-level feeling that it's going to go back up." But even the best drivers can't always keep their cars from spinning out of control. That's when crashes happen. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

On Parole, *by Akira Yoshimura, translated from the Japanese by Stephen Snyder (Harcourt; $23).* After spending sixteen years in prison for murder, Shiro Kikutani emerges terrified by his new freedom. Once a respected schoolteacher, he now gratefully submits to the drudgery of working on a chicken farm, shovelling hen droppings and exterminating flies. In unnervingly quiet prose, the novel conveys the precariousness of a killer's seeking to rejoin the world of ordinary men. By the time we learn the savagery of his crime, we are too close to this fragile man to be appalled, even by the fact that he feels no remorse.

The Third Eye, *by David Knowles (Talese/Doubleday; $23).* Knowles's hatefully pretentious narrator, Jefferson, is the scion of a New York City real-estate fortune, who insists on experiencing life solely in aesthetic terms. In a voyeuristic art project, he rents the apartment across the street at below-market rates to attractive, unsuspecting women, whom he secretly photographs. But after a mysterious Indian woman moves in and then disappears, Jefferson starts to wonder whether he is being watched himself. With sure precision the author achieves a pervasive sense of noirish disquiet, but, just as his narrator refuses to distinguish life from art, Knowles's hip self-consciousness sometimes interferes with the narrative impetus.

I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1942-1945, *by Victor Klemperer, translated from the German by Martin Chalmers (Random House; $29.95).* In this, the second volume of his remarkable chronicle of life as a Jew in Nazi Germany, Klemperer investigates the language of totalitarianism. Again and again, he wonders, "Who can tell me the true mood of the people?" In "the dainty rococo casket of Dresden," Klemperer clings to the daily discipline of his diary. He and his wife, Eva, struggle with coal and potatoes, with the disappearance of friends, with the poisonous imbecilities of a regime devoted to the destruction of Jews and the death of reason. The Klemperers, man and wife, survive it all. "I Will Bear Witness" is a self-portrait of rare candor and shrewdness; it may also come to be seen as one of the central documents of the twentieth century.

Men in the Off Hours, *by Anne Carson (Knopf; $24).* In this collection of poems and lyric essays, Virginia Woolf and Thucydides discuss the logistics of battle on an imaginary movie set, a father's madness is recalled through an inherited cardigan, and touch is determined to be "the most difficult task." A Canadian classicist who can imagine herself as Catherine Deneuve or Sappho, Carson collapses the ancient into the modern—for instance, burlesquing the way a TV documentary might approach the Lazarus story, with "home videos of Lazarus / in short pants racing his sisters up a hill." In the closing essay, she returns to Woolf's diaries and sees an unexpected epitaph for her mother, who died while the book was being written.

Delta Land, *by Maude Schuyler Clay (Mississippi; $35).* A fifth-generation resident of Sumner, Mississippi, Clay began her first series of black-and-white photographs in 1993, commissioned by a local doctor to capture the "stark and elegiac beauty" of the Delta flatscape. In her fields, swamps, and woodlands, the man-made structures—churches, grocery stores, gas pumps, plantation houses, grain elevators, railyards—appear abandoned and overgrown, visited only by stray dogs and migrating geese. Hovering over it all is history, evoked in the words scrawled on a makeshift grave marker: "Gone but not forgotten."

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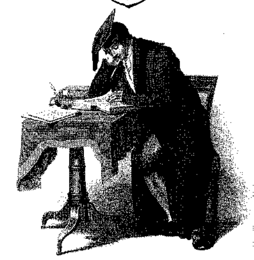

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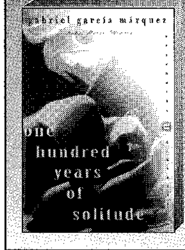

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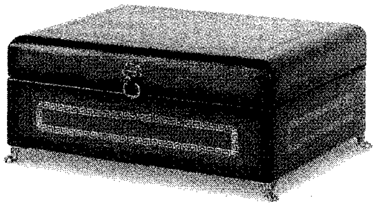

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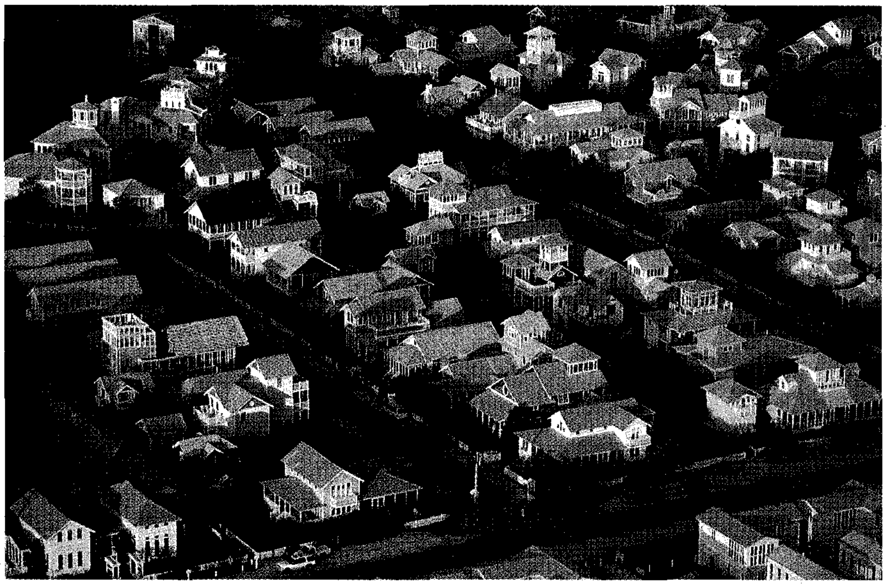
BOOKS

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

The anti-sprawl doctors make a manifesto.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER



Picture-perfect Seaside, Florida, est. 1981, is the quintessential neotraditional town.

If you want to talk about solutions to suburban sprawl, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are the people to go to. Since 1981, they have designed several dozen towns around the United States, all of which are intended to exploit the virtues of narrow, pedestrian-oriented streets, small-scale buildings, and the friendly ambience of old-fashioned villages. The big difference between a community created by Duany and Plater-Zyberk and almost every other suburb is that in their towns you can do a lot of your daily business without a car. They didn't design Celebration, Florida, the model village built in the mid-nineties by the Disney company, but it couldn't have happened without them.

Duany and Plater-Zyberk, who are husband and wife, run an architectural firm in Miami that is usually referred to as DPZ. Plater-Zyberk is the dean of the University of Miami School of Architecture. They call what they do "neotraditional," and in their new book, "Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream" (North Point; $30), written with their colleague Jeff Speck, they compare the towns they design to a Mazda Miata: "a car that looks, sounds and handles like a British roadster but maintains the rate-of-repair record of a Honda Civic." In other words, looks like old, works like new. This approach has brought them so much attention and so many followers that it has turned into a movement. In 1993, they helped found the Congress for the New Urbanism, which holds an annual gathering that is somewhere between a revival meeting and an academic conference. There are not only New Urbanist architects and planners; there are even a few New Urbanist politicians (including the mayor of Milwaukee, John Norquist) and some New Urbanist real-estate developers. There are by now around two hundred Traditional Neighborhood Developments, or T.N.D.s, as the New Urbanists call their output (at C.N.U. meetings, they talk a lot about T.N.D.s designed by DPZ), spread out around the United States in a mixture of freestanding towns and suburban neighborhoods, along with several similar projects in urban areas. The number of Traditional Neighborhood Developments built so far is nothing compared to the thousands of wretched tract-house developments, gated communities, and clustered condominium projects that swallow up the land, but there are enough to make even the staggeringly reactionary home-building industry take notice. Duany and Plater-Zyberk have been invited twice in the last few years to speak at the National Association of Home Builders convention in Dallas, a sure sign that the industry has conceded that they are a force to be reckoned with.

The New Urbanists' Rome is a small town in the Florida panhandle called Seaside, which Duany and Plater-Zyberk designed nearly twenty years ago for a developer, Robert Davis, who had inherited eighty acres on the Gulf of Mexico. Seaside is more a vacation community than the kind of settlement Davis envisioned, but an empty stretch of coast forty-five minutes from Panama City isn't where many people would choose to live full time. And Seaside feels like a village, not a resort. It has clear edges; it doesn't sprawl. You would need a heart of stone not to like Seaside. Prince Charles was bowled over by the place. It's pretty, but it's not hopelessly sweet. The building lots are small and close together, and there is an ordered system of streets, pathways, and public places. Although most of the buildings in Seaside are traditional cottages, a handful are modern, and the modern ones give the place life and demonstrate that what matters is how big buildings are and where they are placed, not what style they are designed in. (When Seaside was used as the setting for "The Truman Show," the modern buildings were mostly dressed up or kept out of sight, giving the place a coyness it doesn't, thankfully, really have.)

Duany and Plater-Zyberk's book is coming out at a moment when sprawl has become a political issue. Al Gore has argued for legislation that would encourage denser use of land, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has added anti-sprawl initiatives to its portfolio, on the not entirely unreasonable premise that Wal-Marts are a factor in the decline of the small-town Main Streets that the trust sees as its duty to preserve. And yet if Duany and Plater-Zyberk are in tune with political currents, they seem remarkably out of synch with a lot of architectural thinking. When Seaside was new, it was daring. Duany and Plater-Zyberk were knights riding into battle against the planning-and-development establishment, out to prove that there could be an alternative to Levittown and its progeny. That their brand of radicalism relied heavily on looking backward only made them appear to be on the cutting edge, since in the nineteen-eighties much of the freshest architecture was designed to refer to the past. Now, however, the paradox of being fresh by being traditional has played itself out. To be conservative today is simply to be, well, conservative. Young architects don't like things that look old.

Duany and Plater-Zyberk (who are both fifty) have made as great a mark on the world as any architects of their generation, and yet it's common to hear them dismissed simply as merchants of nostalgia. This is due in no small part to the fact that they don't care all that much about what things look like. The New Urbanism's most important contribution, from Seaside onward, has been in the realm of codes that dictate the form and shape of towns, not in the design of individual buildings. Figuring out how wide streets should be, how parking lots can be hidden, and what is the best ratio of row houses to freestanding houses isn't the sexiest part of architecture. It may, however, be the most necessary, at least in terms of making towns that work. Modern architects could always make buildings, but they have almost never managed the trick of making streets. Duany and Plater-Zyberk, on the other hand, operate on the belief that streets are what make cities work, not buildings. And they have understood from the beginning that the absence of streets—or, rather, the replacement of streets by six- and eight-lane traffic arteries—is what makes most new suburbs so unpleasant to be in.

By putting the elements of community-building first, Duany and Plater-Zyberk have actually reclaimed the social priorities that the modern movement assumed early in this century. But aesthetics is what gets the most attention, and most of the places Duany and Plater-Zyberk design do, alas, look too cute by half. Kentlands, for instance, the DPZ-

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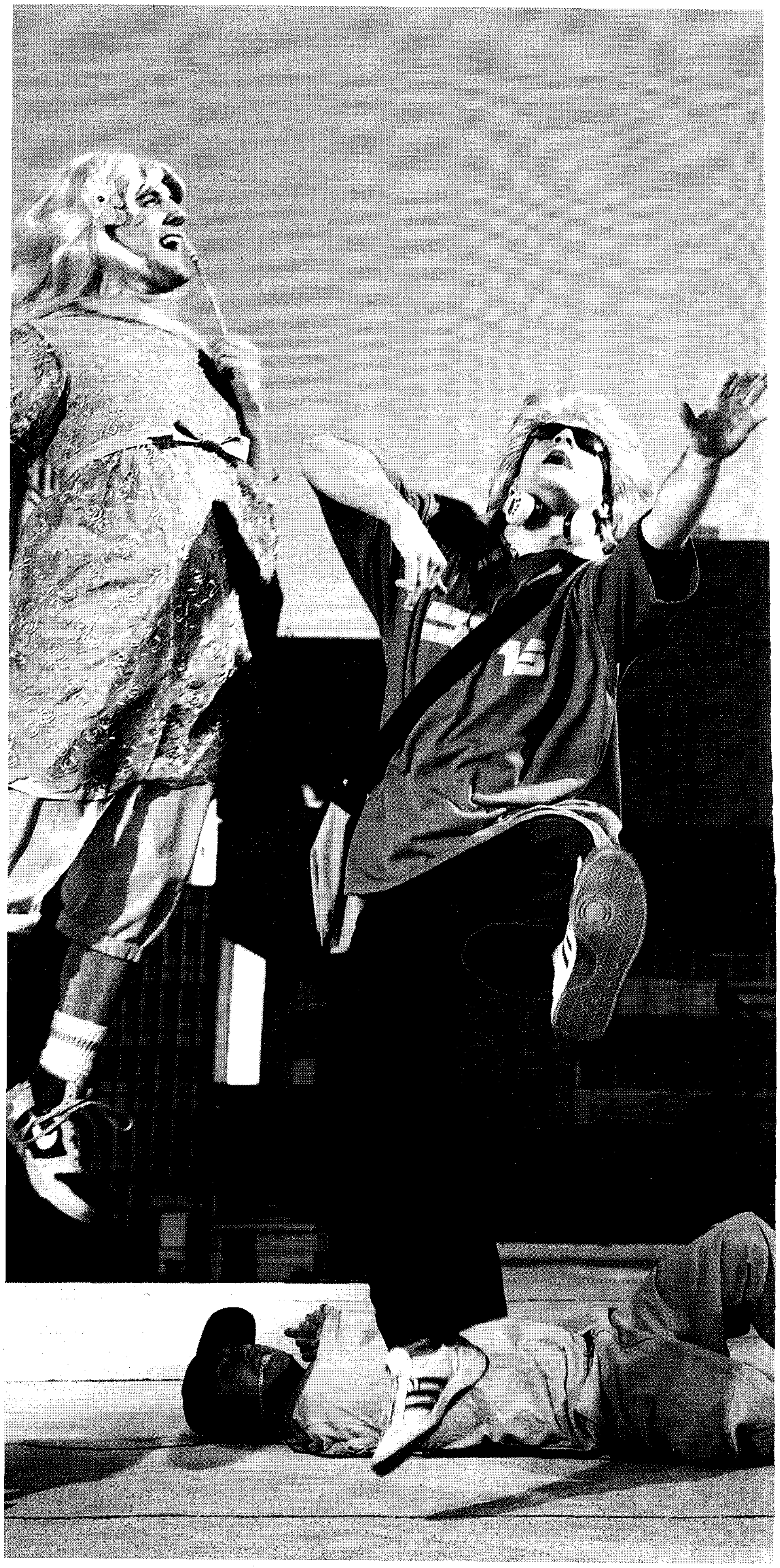


Want an expert assessment of Shakespeare's hip-hop skills? Try the five twenty-something actors who play all the roles in "The Bomb-itty of Errors," a rap-concert adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy of almost the same name. "A lot of his lines are just too good to change," Gregory (GQ) Qaiyum humbly admits, launching into an impromptu beat-box reading in iambic pentameter. " 'How can she thus then call us by our names?'—Shakespeare wrote that."

Jordan Allen-Dutton talks right over him: "Secretly, we're injecting the Shakespeare audience with hip-hop and hip-hop heads with classics."

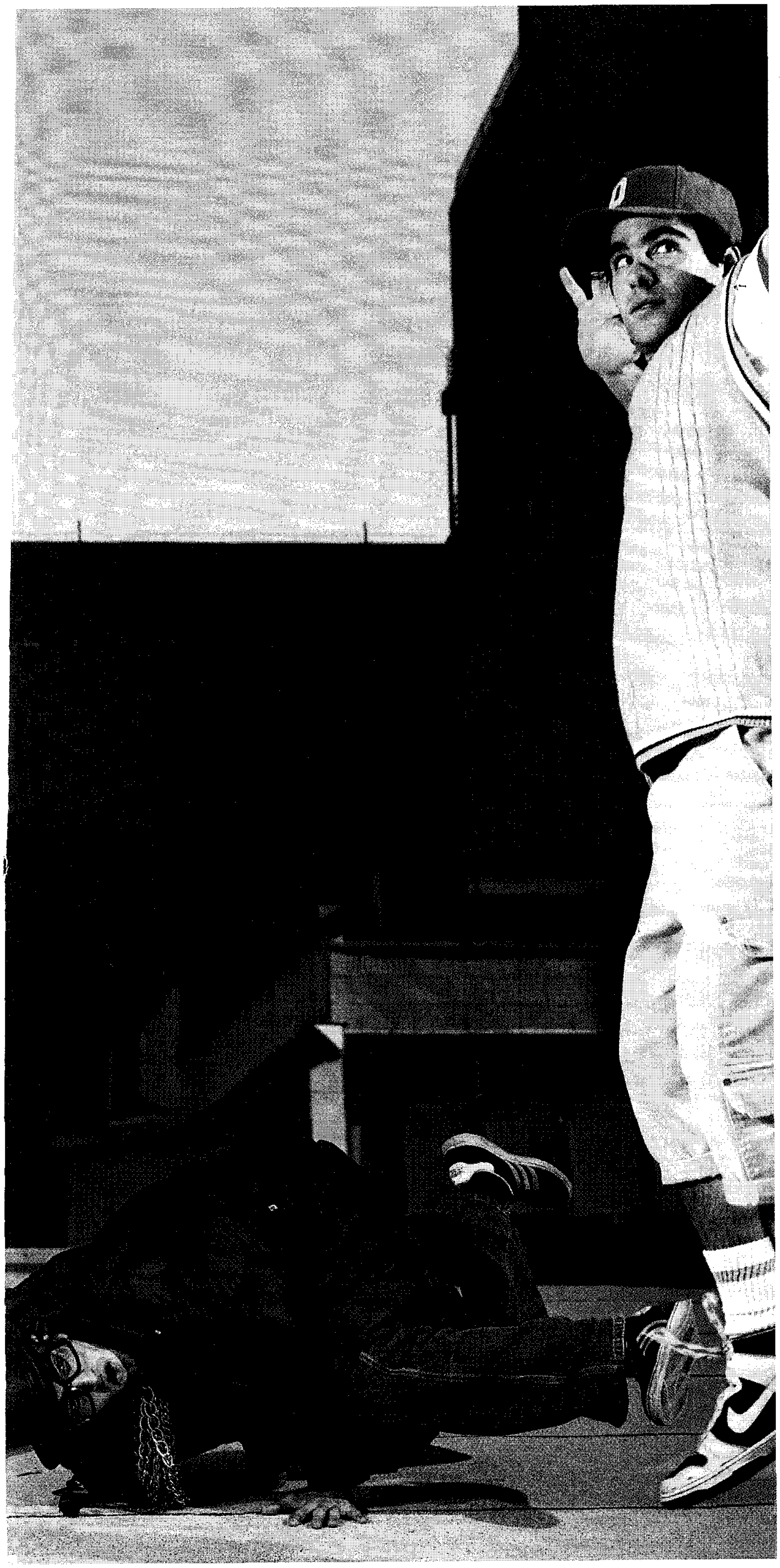
"I'll give *you* a secret injection," Jason Catalano says. And the boys are off, besting each other with insults as bawdy as the rewrite they've given the Bard.

There's a raffish early-Beatles quality to the Bomb-itty crew (at left, Erik Weiner, Allen-Dutton, Jeffrey A. Qaiyum, GQ, and Catalano). Their onstage blend of gangsta pose and groundling humor ("Villain! Imbecillin! You be illin'!") may be packing SoHo's 45 Bleecker Theatre and bringing them fame, but they seem happiest in their own world of boys-only goofiness. Talking at a local diner over mouthfuls of turkey sandwich, they hint at a First Folio edition of "Bomb-itty," with "kicknotes" to explain obscure rap terms. As the conversation turns to their most adventurous rhymes, the ensuing rap-sampling mayhem settles on a passage in which the locale of both "Comedy" and "Bomb-itty"—Ephesus—rhymes with Adriana's lovely "breastisses."

"I think Shakespeare would be proud of that one," Daryl Roth, the play's producer, says, looking on with unmistakably maternal affection.

"That's actually his line," Allen-Dutton tells her, not caring who believes it.

—*Kevin Conley*



designed community in Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C., is full of mock-Georgian town houses, and even though they are all put together in exactly the right way, opposite pleasing squares and along tree-shaded streets, you know this isn't Georgetown. In "Suburban Nation," Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck don't try to defend what Kentlands looks like. They talk about it mainly as a work of social engineering. "Mansions sit just around the corner from town houses, with garage apartments located on a shared rear lane," they write. This "contradicted all the accumulated wisdom of the home-building industry, which said that integrating different prices in the same neighborhood would kill sales." Kentlands has not been a runaway success—it has had serious economic problems—but the jumble of housing types doesn't seem to have bothered buyers, and houses in Kentlands sell for more than houses do in conventional subdivisions nearby. As for architectural style, the authors try to make the claim that traditional architecture is really just a device to help them achieve their social goals: "In Kentlands, the mid-Atlantic Georgian vocabulary camouflages differences by creating a harmonious streetscape. Any cachet that may be associated with the mansions rubs off on the apartments as well." It's an intriguing claim, and maybe it's the only possible defense for retro architecture in the age of Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas: my social goals made me do it.

"Suburban Nation" dissects the physical design of the suburbs brilliantly. It is at its best when it analyzes what makes old neighborhoods work and what makes most new suburbs fail. "Not only is a society healthier when its diverse members are in daily contact with one another, it is also more convenient," the authors write. "Imagine being able to grow old in a neighborhood that can accommodate your changing housing needs while also providing a home for your children and grandchildren. Of course, living in Georgetown does not guarantee that this outcome will occur—but living in Phoenix guarantees that it will not." They see exactly what is wrong with the conventional tract-house suburb: the confusing, curvilinear streets, the fact that even the most trivial errand requires an automobile, the way private

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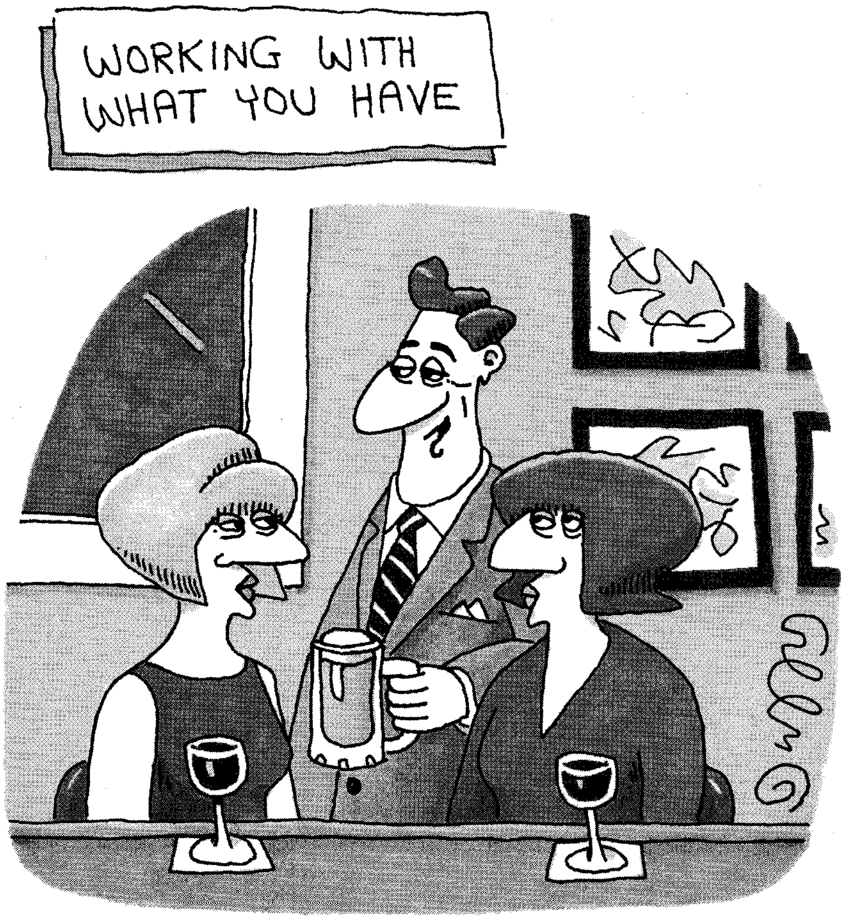
WORKING WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

"May I buy you ladies a drink? I once rode in an elevator with Ernest Borgnine."

• •

space is valued over public space. Most postwar suburbs have barely any public space, but sidewalks, parks, and squares are the defining elements of cities and villages. "In the sparse universe of sprawl, the elementary particle is the single-family house," they point out. "The current model is the fast-food version of the American dream—some call it the McMansion. Its roots can be traced back to the manse on the agricultural estate, or the cabin in the woods. Unlike its predecessors, however, the McMansion is located in the center of a small plot of land, surrounded at close quarters by more of the same."

Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck set forth more clearly than anyone has done in our time the elements of good town planning. "Suburban Nation" is both a critique and a handbook. Unfortunately, the authors aren't content to leave it at that. They say in their introduction that "the American dream just doesn't seem to be coming true any more," and you know by page xii that you are in for some heavy missionary work. I wish these people could loosen up about the world a little more, because so much of what they say is right. They observe that most suburban planning serves the flow of traffic, not the flow of people, and that we have a perverse history of contorting our social patterns to accommodate the needs of the automobile. They know that the most important acts of planning in the history of the United States were the mortgage guarantees for veterans of the Second World War, which subsidized the purchase of suburban homes (would William Levitt have dared to fill up all those potato fields on Long Island with Cape Cod cottages otherwise?), and the Interstate Highway Act, which used federal funds for building highways while urban transit systems went begging. In the nineteen-fifties, the government all but told us to leave the cities. And the au-

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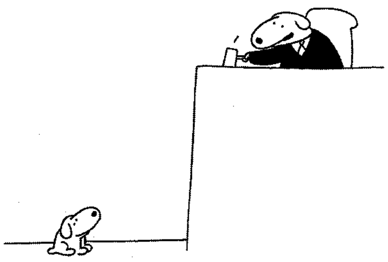

"Not guilty, because puppies do these things."

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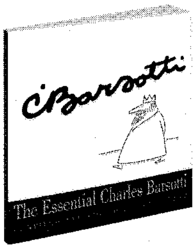

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thors are wise enough to see that so much of what has been done recently in the name of reversing the anti-urban trend is shortsighted and false: office buildings, stadiums, and entertainment centers that have been dropped into the middle of cities like alien objects, surrounded by parking facilities so that no one actually has to traverse a city street.

Suburban sprawl is wildly destructive of the environment, in terms of the land it gobbles up as well as the pollution created by zillions of unnecessary automobile trips. But declaring the death of the American dream is at once a hopeless cliché and deeply ambitious, and to deliver on it you have to be conversant with a lot more than city planning. Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck are so fixed on physical determinism that they seem to overlook the importance of social mores, the economy, and preëxisting behavior patterns. It's nice to think that a well-designed neighborhood will in and of itself instill civilized behavior in its residents, but that assumes that architecture and design have a lot more power over people's lives than they do. The lovely main street of Stockbridge doesn't guarantee that a healthy community will exist in Massachusetts any more than the harsh red brick high-rise towers of Stuyvesant Town rule out a sense of community in Manhattan.

It's true that there is a fundamental contradiction between the principles of a civilized community and the idea of the automobile. Charleston is a more inviting place than, say, Irvine. But it's also true that the landscape of suburban sprawl, as J. B. Jackson has eloquently observed, provides many people with the privacy and the individual plots of land that they crave. That is a problem for which the authors have no solution. They yearn for a culture shift that would make people prefer densely situated houses in a more communal setting. The expression of community that the small, dense village represents is something that most Americans like in principle but not always in practice. The sprawling reaches of Houston, say, or Phoenix or Las Vegas—which are defined by their roads, by the idea of movement, and by the glibness of their architecture—have an easy allure. They also possess, for many archi-

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Their name notwithstanding, the New Urbanists sometimes seem to have much in common with the long tradition of anti-urbanism that runs through American history, from Jefferson onward: the agrarian traditionalists who knew that you have to control the land to survive and who disdained urban culture as effete. "Suburban Nation" reinforces the idea that Duany and Plater-Zyberk love the village more than the metropolis. Nevertheless, neotraditional planning has been demonstrably effective in urban areas. Battery Park City in lower Manhattan was designed by Alexander Cooper and Stanton Eckstut at around the same time DPZ designed Seaside, and has been as widely praised. Duany and Plater-Zyberk were criticized early on for being devoted to something closer to a New Suburbanism than New Urbanism, but in the last few years they have worked frequently in cities. One of DPZ's current high-profile projects, Riverside, is a dense, mixed-use development of town houses and apartments around a formal square in Atlanta, a commercial builder's intentional rebuke to the idea of sprawl.

The New Urbanists may never be fully comfortable with big cities, because cities will never be wholly controllable, and control is what Duany and Plater-Zyberk want. They talk a certain amount about Jane Jacobs, and they see ties between their ideas and her theories about human scale and the importance of the street in making neighborhoods work, but Jacobs likes messiness, and I'm not sure how much Duany and Plater-Zyberk do. As far as real cities are concerned, they may in the end have more in common with Lewis Mumford, who was in many ways Jacobs's adversary. Mumford disliked the density of heavily built downtowns, yearned for the garden city, and was deeply suspicious of the changes that technology was bringing to the culture. He was a brilliant critic, but he could be infuriatingly doctrinaire in his thinking, and his Achilles' heel was his hatred of disorder. He thought everything could be rationally planned, if only sensible people would put their minds to it and listen to him. So do Duany and Plater-Zyberk. They have a similar certainty that they can make life better for us all, and the only thing that compromises their brilliance is the absoluteness of their vision. ♦

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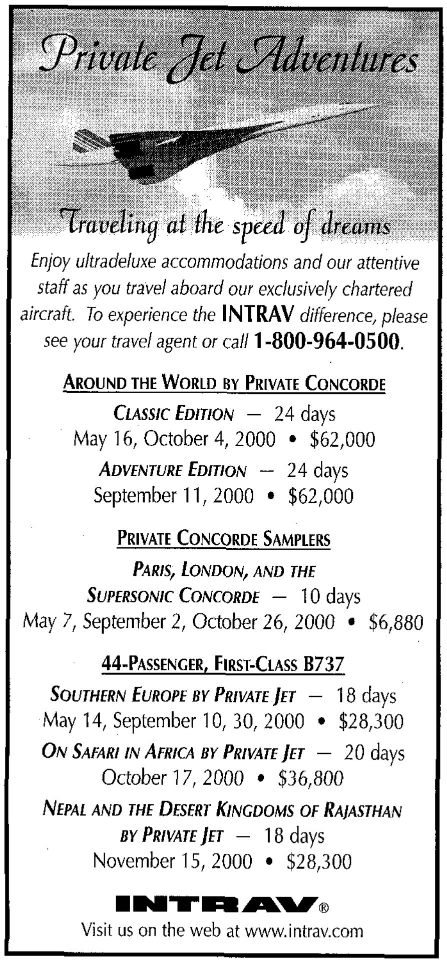
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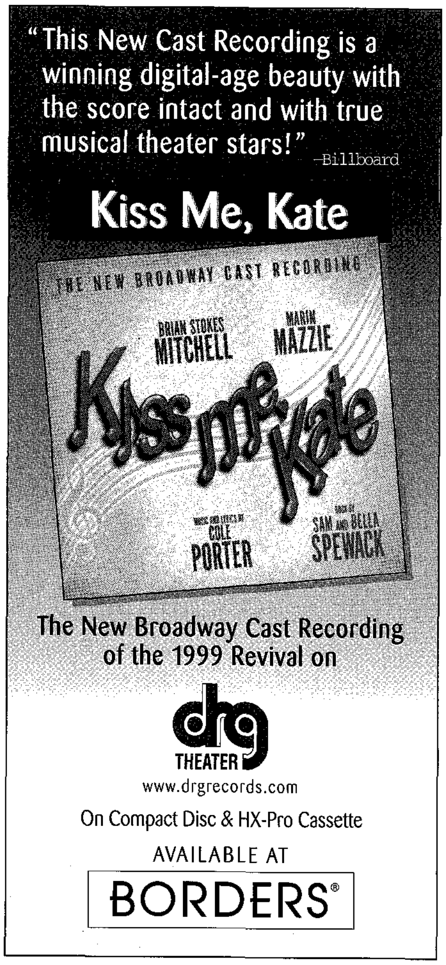
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HELL-RAISING WOMEN

And the men who love them.

BY DAVID DENBY

In "Erin Brockovich," Julia Roberts appears in scene after scene wearing halter tops with a bit of bra showing; there's a good bit of leg showing, too, often while she's holding an infant in one arm. This upbeat, inspirational melodrama, based on a true story and written by Susannah Grant and directed by Steven Soderbergh, has been brought to life by a movie star on a heavenly rampage. Roberts swings into rooms, ablaze with indignation, her breasts pushed up and bulging out of the skimpy tops, and she rants at the people gaping at her. She's a mother and a moral heroine who dresses like trailer trash but then snaps at anyone who doesn't take her seriously—a real babe in arms, who gets to protect the weak and tell off the powerful while never turning her back on what she is. "Erin Brockovich" has been conceived as a populist pile driver; the movie is obvious and repetitive, a little cheap even, but one can still enjoy it enormously—its raffish good humor shakes up the old categories of virtue (i.e., a good person should look like a good person). The picture could be the kind of hit that crystallizes the cultural mood of a certain period, just as "Billy Jack" or "Norma Rae" or "Thelma and Louise" did in earlier periods. (At the very least, "Erin Brockovich" drives the last nail into the coffin of feminist sanctimoniousness.) Such movies are often crude, elbowing affairs, but they may mean more to people than better-made or more subtly modulated films—they have an element of rough candor. When Roberts flashes a smile this time, it's usually because she wants something. Her triumph in "Erin Brockovich" is that a deep-down lovableness breaks through the scorching tantrums.

Twice divorced, with three little children, Erin is unemployed and vulnerable, but she still goes through life with a chip on her shoulder. By any normal standard, she's a self-dramatizing narcissist and a pain in the neck, a woman who never notices the context around her but just blurts out what she's thinking, only to flare up at the first sign of resistance. Desperate, she bulls her way into a small Los Angeles-area law office run by the aging Ed Masry (Albert Finney); she has no law degree, not much education at all, but she picks up on things very quickly, and Masry, after first firing her and then taking her back, lets her investigate the situation of some families living near a Pacific Gas & Electric plant in the rural town of Hinkley, California. The men and women in these families have been diagnosed with multiple cancers; their children bleed at the nose and feel sick all the time. P. G. & E. has been dumping a lethal chemical called Chromium 6 and telling people that it's good for them. When Erin finds out that the company is trying to buy the families' houses and pay their medical bills, she senses a bribe and a coverup. The families are dazed, battered, even slightly guilt-ridden about suspecting the motives of an outfit for which some of them have worked for decades, but Erin, with her ready sense of outrage, knows that these people are being pushed around. The chip on her shoulder turns into a baseball bat.

Playing crusaders is fun: Julia Roberts in "Erin Brockovich."

ROBERT MELEE

Roberts dominates every scene of the movie, but she doesn't run completely free. She plays against two male stalwarts, and, though she shoves them hard, she can't quite go through or around them, and their stolid mass prevents the movie from becoming a mere star trip. Albert Finney, sixty-three, was perhaps the handsomest man in movies thirty-five years ago. He's heavy now, and he carries his bulk awkwardly, but he creates a character out of Ed Masry—a compromised, too-reasonable man who's a little past it, a little phlegmatic. Masry would love to amble into retirement, but this noisy, beautiful termagant won't let him alone. It's fun watching Roberts bearbaiting Finney, taunting and pushing until some fire, at last, comes into his eyes. They're an odd pair, to put it mildly, but as a team they grow in authority. Meanwhile, at home, Erin shacks up with George (Aaron Eckhart), a biker who lives next door. George is one of those ineffably calm gentle-stud movie lovers (Kris Kristofferson would have played him twenty-five years ago), a man so sure of himself that he can't be thrown by a tough-talking woman. George, who takes care of Erin's children while she's out haranguing everybody else, turns out to be a hippie-biker dreamboat, bearded but beerless, and Eckhart whispers his way through the part.

Erin, Ed Masry, and the supportive George are a band of irregulars, the latest in a group that includes the scruffy or troubled heroes and heroines of such films as "Silkwood," "True Crime," "A Civil Action," "The Insider," and "The Hurricane." These pictures make up a small, earnest genre,

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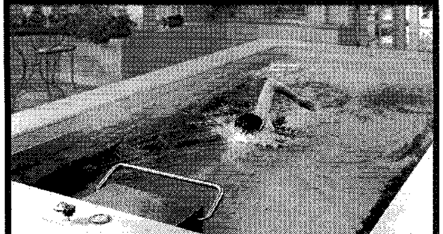

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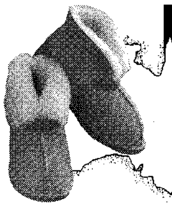

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the genre of liberal indignation. There are still good causes to fight, and, anyway, for big stars, playing the crusaders at the center of these movies is always fun. Telling off a stuffed shirt reassures an actress earning twenty million dollars a picture that she hasn't become one herself. "Erin Brockovich" is generally warm-spirited, but it has a jeering side that occasionally gets out of hand. Peter Coyote and the terrific theatre actress Veanne Cox get stuck in rum roles as proper lawyers who disapprove of Erin's style. Naturally, she razzes them, and they have to stand there like dummies, openmouthed at her audacity. At its worst, the movie provides endless opportunities for Julia Roberts to set people straight.

But even these lousy scenes are inseparable from what's good about the movie. The audience is alive to Erin because she's a moral person with no sense of propriety—she's Ralph Nader reborn as a female Jesse Ventura. Steven Soderbergh, who has had his ups and downs artistically and commercially, must have realized that he had unleashed a force of nature in Roberts and that all he needed to do was stay out of its way. In the past, in such films as "Out of Sight" and "The Limey," Soderbergh has played with dream and fantasy sequences, or he's mounted elaborate time schemes, but "Erin Brockovich" goes straight as an arrow. Soderbergh devotes himself to the people in the movie, and he doesn't simplify things. Erin likes George because he's a real sweetheart, but she uses him, turning him into a maid and a babysitter, and we're meant to notice that the saints who battle the evils of this world can also walk all over the people who are closest to them—and feel righteous into the bargain. In the end, what makes Julia Roberts's Erin admirable is that she has a powerful common touch. When Roberts interviews the bewildered families out by the polluted plant, she slows down and takes her time, and her sympathy allows the movie to tap a deep well of rural sadness—the defeatism of country people who aren't wily enough to protect themselves. Roberts may be a visiting goddess, but she's not a phony. Her performance says that you can do anything you want if you have the guts and the energy to do it. Erin not only helps the families; she fights at the law office for her own money, and that feels right, too. Erin Brockovich is a great, audience-pleasing role. It allows Julia Roberts to express as much of who she is as a woman, and as a star, as she could ever hope for.

An earnest romantic film is hard to pull off these days, and "Waking the Dead," from the Scott Spencer novel, teeters on the cliff edge of absurdity. The movie is sombre, fixated, a little gummy. But "Waking the Dead" more than holds your interest, and it even delivers an epiphany at the end which the kindly will call "bittersweet." Perhaps the film works as well as it does because a good part of it is set in a less knowing period than the present—the early seventies, when Fielding Pierce (Billy Crudup), a Harvard grad who wants a political career, falls in love with a humorlessly dedicated left-wing activist, Sarah Williams (Jennifer Connelly). A working-class boy, patriotic and ambitious, Fielding doesn't agree with Sarah, but he's mesmerized by her ardent moralizing against American imperialism. When Sarah dies—she's killed in a terrorist attack while helping a group of refugees from Chile—he goes numb with grief, and a decade later, when he runs for Congress, he's still frozen up and sad. Some of us may think that Sarah was never really right for Fielding, that she exploits some residual guilt in him which ties him up and drains his strength. As he mounts his congressional campaign, he starts to see Sarah's ghost or her shadow—he starts to see *something*—and he falls apart. "Waking the Dead," which was directed with almost too much sensitivity by Keith Gordon, is part political mystery story, part ghost story, and all romantic obsession. The soulful, dark-eyed Connelly is a little thick-tongued—she swallows some of her most important lines—but Crudup goes back and forth between deep reserve and a slightly hysterical emotionalism with impressive skill. To become a star, Crudup needs a role that brings him out a little. He's good at masklike withdrawal, but we don't actually want him to stay haunted forever. ♦

POPULAR MUSIC

REELING IN THE YEARS

The return of Steely Dan.

BY NICK HORNBY

Still smarter than the rest: Donald Fagen (left) and Walter Becker, in 1996.

ANNALISA

The news that a nineteen-seventies rock band has re-formed and recorded its first studio album in a couple of decades would not normally be of much interest to anyone but the most morbid members (and possibly the current leaders) of the English-speaking world. How many of us whooped with delight when we heard that Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young had been persuaded to walk into a studio again recently? The way we consume pop music nowadays is complicated, and becomes more complicated with each passing year: in its post-Elvis form, pop wasn't supposed to hang around so long, and we were never supposed to grow old listening to it. Even so, we have probably retained some basic, if unexamined, truths: however much we might love Randy Newman, Tom Waits, or the last Dylan album, pop music should be made by the young; the best of it belongs to a precise cultural moment; and when that cultural moment has gone the artist should do the decent thing and go, too.

None of this, however, really applies to Steely Dan, whose new album, "Two Against Nature," is their first studio recording since "Gaucho," in 1980. For a start, they were never properly young, even in the seventies: indeed, Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, whom one would describe as Steely Dan's heart and soul were there any evidence that they were interested in either a heart or a soul (they would probably regard both as vulgar, rock-and-roll attributes), have always given the impression that middle age was wasted on the middle-aged. They hated touring, and stopped altogether until they were somehow persuaded to record a live album a few years back: their audience, they must have assumed, was now too old to do anything but listen appreciatively and smile at some of their drier ironies. Besides, they have long favored experienced jazz and R. & B. session musicians over a regular lineup, a practice that has removed them even further from the rock-music mainstream. And their records (and they were records; strange to think that, until now, this most precise of groups belonged to the pre-digital era) became progressively less pop and seemed to express more someone's idea of what "adult" music must be, full of jazz changes and impeccably understated rhythms. (It's only their early hits that are still played on the radio.) In all likelihood, Becker and Fagen are delighted to have finally left their youth, and their early chart success, behind them: they can now give free rein to the crabby East Coast intellectuals who have always resided within.

A visit to Steely Dan's Web site, which has transcripts of Becker and Fagen's recent on-line chats with fans, confirms the suspicion that they were

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never likely to retain the sizable pop fan base they once had, mostly because that kink of admiration doesn't appear to be reciprocated. Becker, after hearing one admirer's analysis of "Rikki Don't Lose That Number," one of the hits that got them an audience in the first place, is moved to reply, "Of all the outré interpretations of the lyrics of 'Rikki,' that is the most boring yet." Another young enthusiast is told, "You may be very eager and fifteen and a huge fan, but you've gotta come up with some more exciting questions." It is hard to imagine that Britney Spears's people are watching the Steely Dan charm offensive and taking notes.

If Becker and Fagen are unconcerned that they are no longer young, then they are even less likely to be worrying about having missed their cultural moment, mostly because their cultural moment was somewhere circa 1959: they have spent much of their career imagining an American past that was long gone by the time they got around to recording their first album, "Can't Buy a Thrill," in 1972. "Yes we're gonna have a wingding / A summer smoker underground / It's just a dugout that my dad built / In case the Reds decide to push the button down," Fagen sang on his brilliant solo album "The Nightfly," in 1982, and this unreliable nostalgia (Fagen may not be young, but he certainly isn't old enough for wingdings) permeates an awful lot of what Steely Dan has done. What makes Becker and Fagen so smart, and the old Steely Dan records so interesting, is that, rather than opting for some sort of phony bebop Beat shtick, they adapted contemporary music—the pseudo-sophisticated jazz-funk that gave such a sheen to "Aja," their best album, and "Gaucho." *This*, they seemed to be saying—once one has gone backward and forward through all the retro-futurism—is what the faux-luxe late fifties would have sounded like now. Or something like that. Of course, the levels of irony were lost on some people, who missed the faux part of the faux luxe and took Steely Dan as the last word in contemporary chic, but that only added to the band's appeal. Meanwhile, a lot of rock fans, people more interested in Guns N' Roses and in getting wasted than in the complexities of the whole faux-luxe thing, just thought they sucked. (I was in a Tower Records once when a couple of young men with a lot more hair than I have spotted a copy of "Citizen Steely Dan," the boxed set that contains the band's oeuvre, and burst into immoderate laughter. "Sixty bucks!" one of them kept saying. "Sixty bucks for one guitar riff!" The riff in question was in all likelihood the atypically rockin' introduction to "Reeling In the Years"; that aside, the Tower Records Wayne and Garth seemed to be saying, the Steely Dan sound didn't kick enough ass—a valid, if overly straightforward, viewpoint.)

In a way, using nineteen-seventies jazz-funk to paint sound pictures of the nineteen-fifties was a peculiar thing to want to do—no more peculiar, perhaps, than wanting to spend a whole career painting horses, or writing books about serial killers who eat people, but a thin seam to mine nevertheless. What stopped Steely Dan's music from becoming a somewhat arid postmodern joke was that Becker and Fagen couldn't quite bring themselves to ironize their songwriting or compromise their taste for brilliant musicianship. Thus the old albums were packed with gorgeous tunes that people loved (hence the hits), exuberant solos, and enough elliptical and allusive lyrics to keep a whole cyber-castleful of chat rooms happy. It was as if warmth and charm kept creeping in under the edges, even when cool and distance were ostensibly the object of the exercise.

The bad news is that on "Two Against Nature" Becker and Fagen have finally managed to go the whole hog: there is very little to love here. The first song on the album, "Gaslighting Abbie," begins almost stereotypically, with a politely funky bass line and a gentle touch of chicken-scratch rhythm guitar; before long, Donald Fagen is singing the willfully obscure chorus—"Flame is the game / The game we call gaslighting Abbie / It's a luscious invention for three / One summer by the sea"—in his endearingly thin, nasal voice, while the female backup singers swoop jazzily around him. (Next week, I will receive a letter from a helpful reader explaining that gaslighting is a sexual practice involving kerosene, or a method of preparing heroin, and I will feel dim and naïve.) "Gaslighting Abbie" serves admirably as a signifier, a reminder of the rules of the game, but if I never heard it again I can't say I would be terribly distressed; but then that is the risk Steely Dan has always run.

Halfway through "Gaslighting Abbie," it occurs to one that, despite it all, the band was much more a product of its time than we might have suspected back then. Over the past few years, postmodernism has introduced irony to just about everybody. Who hasn't seen five minutes of "Austin Powers," and put a pair of inverted commas around something? Becker and Fagen are still smarter than the rest, their m.o. more complex, but in 1977, when they recorded "Aja," they were competing with the Clash, whose interest in playful, dexterous allusion was strictly limited. Their interest in sonic perfection is similarly less striking than it once was. Nowadays any boy band can go into a studio and come out a few hours later with something that sounds as pristine and luxuriant as "Deacon Blues." Back then, it was enough that Steely Dan knew how to record a sax without distortion. There are times on "Two Against Nature" when Becker and Fagen sound like former child prodigies, unaware that everybody has caught up with them now.

Things pick up a little with "What a Shame About Me," which at least has the virtue of an accessible wit and a slinky, bluesy charm. It's one of Steely Dan's overeducated-loser songs—"I'm still working on the novel / But I'm just about to quit / I'm worrying about the future now / Or maybe this is it"—yet inevitably one is reminded of the lovely, wistful ache of "Deacon Blues." A couple of other tracks slip by ("Two Against Nature" is, it has to be said, awfully one-paced), and then, right in the middle of the album, Becker and Fagen rediscover form and class. "Almost Gothic" and "Jack of Speed" are cute and taut enough, respectively, to earn their place on earlier, more satisfying albums. "Jack of Speed," in particular, with its rolling horn chart and its edgy atmosphere of dread, seems to inspire and engage the musicians for the first time. Then, for the last three songs, it's back to the disengaged jazzy stuff. "Negative Girl" features a vibes solo, which does little to dispel the ambient chill.

There we have it. Shock! Horror! Rock band from the seventies reforms, makes an album that isn't as good as its old ones.

One wouldn't mind so much were it not for the suspicion that this will be the last we'll hear from Becker and Fagen for the next decade or so—after all, here are people who have managed something like three hours of recorded music between them in the past fifteen years. A recent TV documentary on the making of "Aja" went some way toward explaining this paucity of output, as Becker and Fagen played us discarded guitar solo after discarded guitar solo, and various musicians rolled their eyes at the recollection of how demanding their employers had been: perfectionism certainly eats up the years. William Maxwell once described how he extracted perfect sentences from his many different drafts, and put them together with other perfect sentences, and when he had enough perfect sentences he would set about turning them into a book, and one gets the feeling that Becker and Fagen would have approved. If everyone were like this, however, we would end up with some pretty dull plane journeys. The real trouble with "Two Against Nature" is that Steely Dan needs to loosen up a little: pop music is still pop music, no matter how smart you are. ♦

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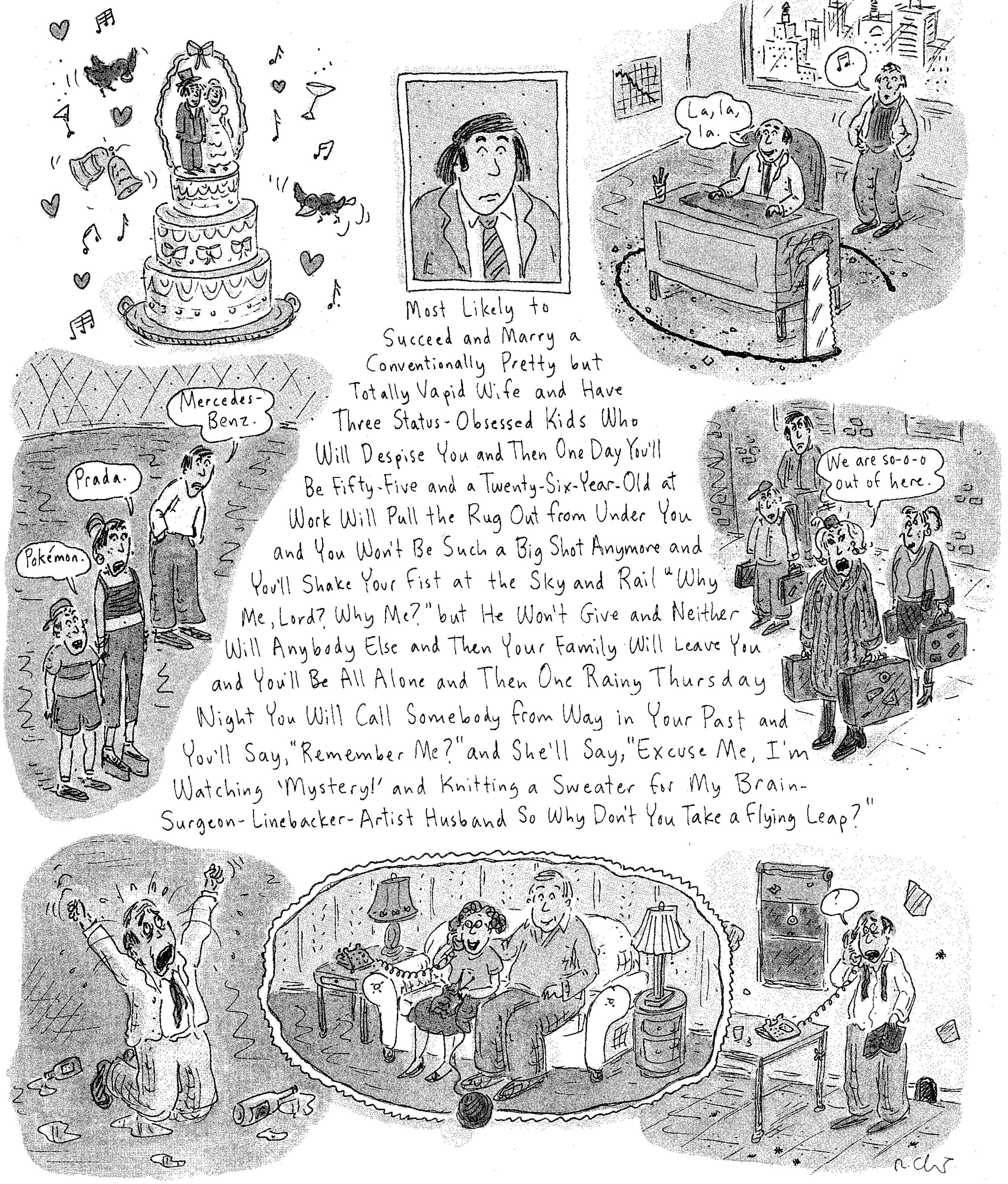
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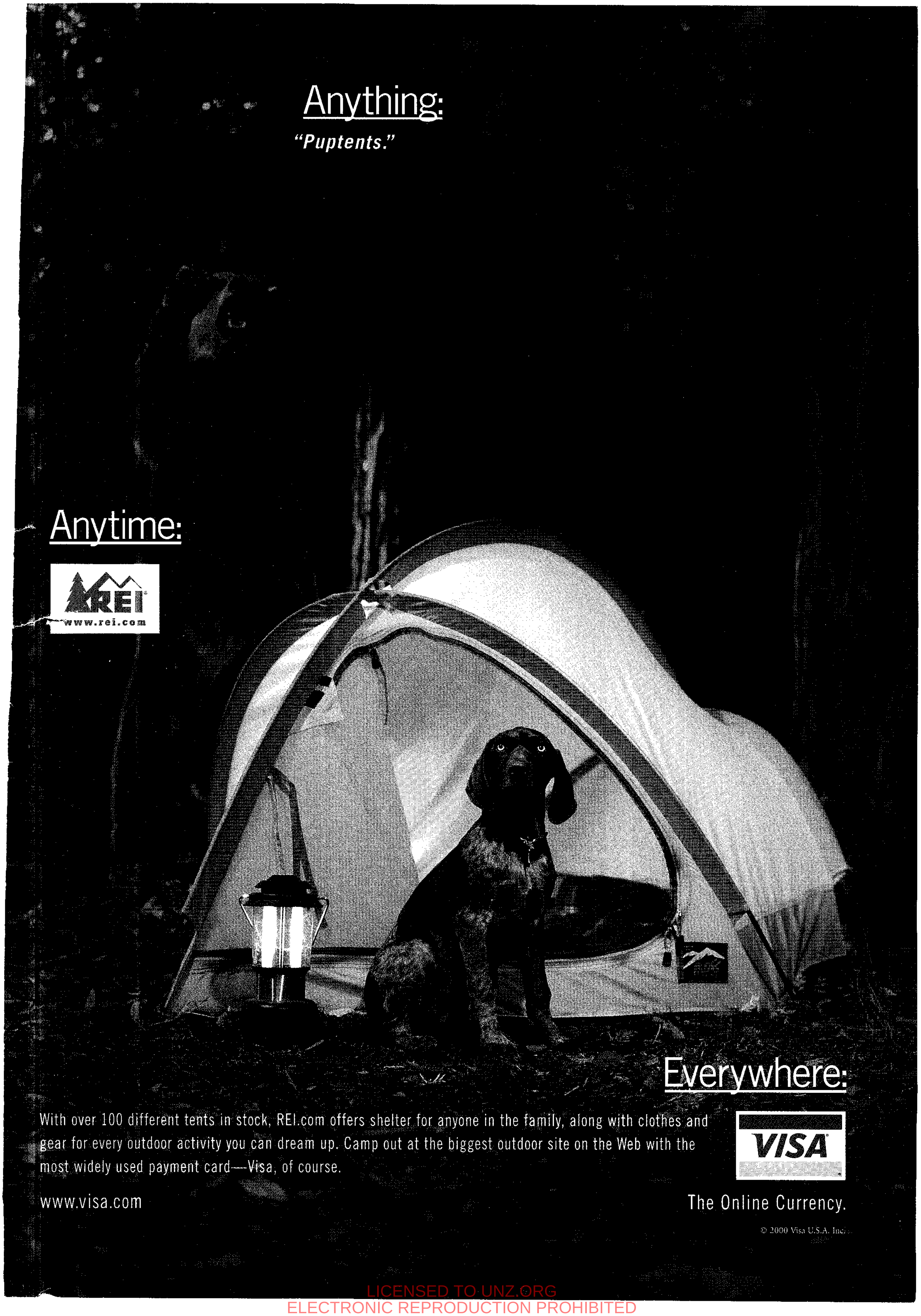
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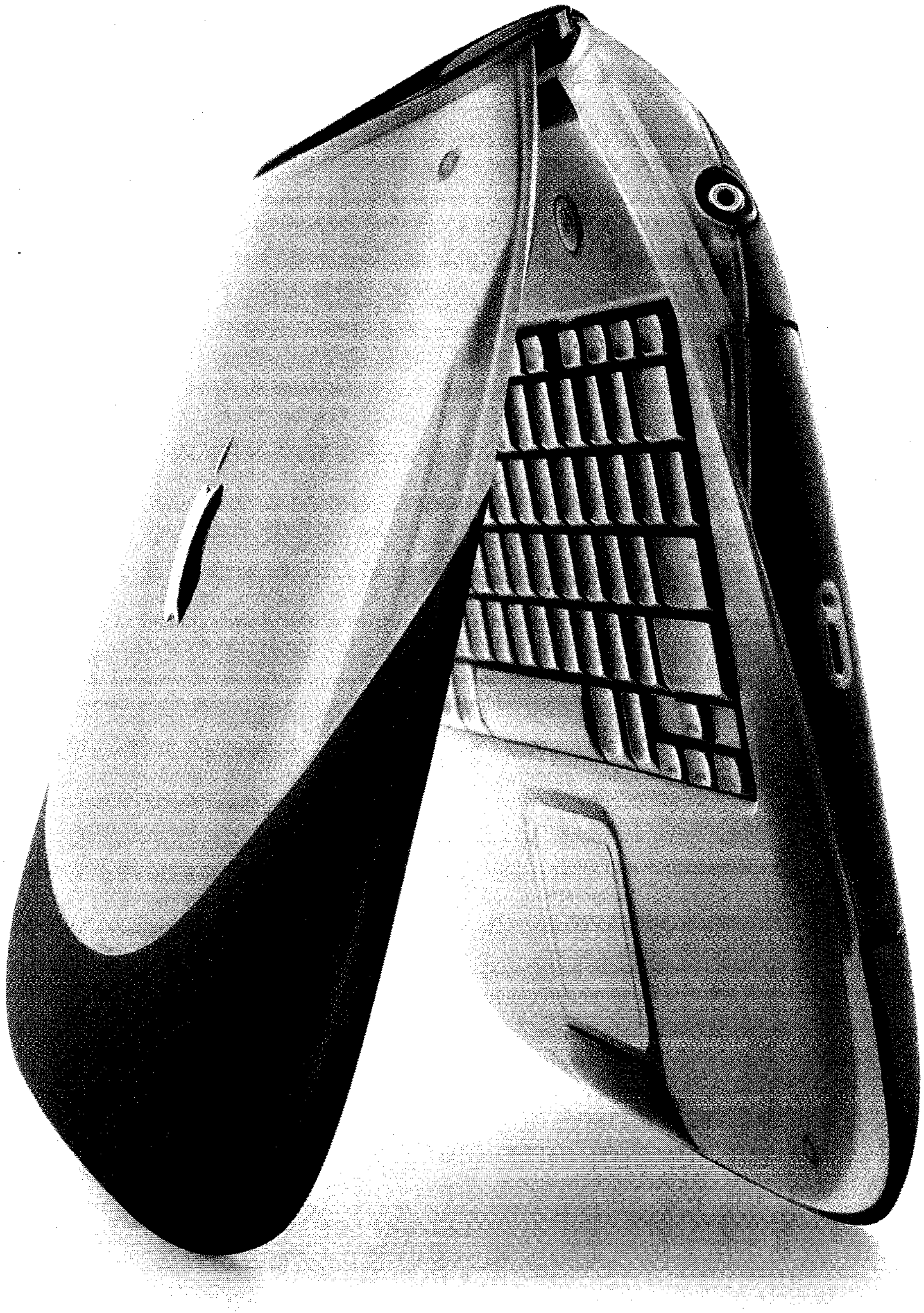

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